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**PRESS RELEASE**

**Uganda extends validity of reserved gorilla permits to December 2022**



KAMPALA— The Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) has updated the advisory on gorilla trekking in Uganda's national parks. In a 13 May 2020 statement to tour operators and businesses, the conservation and national parks agency has said it is extending the validity of reservations and bookings for a variety of tourism products.

This is good news especially tourists who travel to Uganda for the most popular activities of gorilla and chimp tracking. All permits booked for tracking can now be rescheduled to a later date that is convenient to visitor up to end of December 2022.

The statement comes in the wake of cancellation of tours, and all activities in Uganda's national parks due to the COVID19 pandemic. As at the time of writing Uganda has 160 covid19 infections, 63 recovered and zero deaths. A large number of infections is from international truck drivers.

Because the great apes are susceptible to human infections, the Uganda Wildlife Authority has suspended all tracking activities in Uganda.

The Authority will be issuing credit statements to those who paid for the permits to allow them make new reservations. Your tour manager in Uganda can reschedule up to a maximum of two times.



In the meantime, we shall all have to #stayhome and #staysafe due to the lockdowns and travel restriction caused by the #covid19 pandemic. Reservations and tracking will open once the wildlife authority lifts the current suspension on visits to national parks.

#DontCancelPostpone #Travel #StrongTogether

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## Notes to the editor:

The Uganda Wildlife Authority, the government of Uganda agency that manages all national parks and game reserves, has suspended gorilla tracking until further notice. This is because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures to stop its spread to the great apes, which share over 97% of human genes. Tracking other apes like the chimpanzees and golden monkeys is also suspended.

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All tourists who had paid up for permits to hike mountain gorillas in Uganda this year will have their permits renewed till 30 March 2022 at no extra cost (specific to permits). Trekkers should check with their tour operators to reschedule their travel. Tour operators can reschedule to a maximum of two times.

The recent gorilla census puts the total number of the endangered mountain gorillas at 1063 in the wild. Of these, 459 are found in Bwindi Impenetrable National Park in Uganda. Mountain Gorillas are probably Uganda's best known wildlife and in a way easily recognized as a national animal.

The rest are shared between Mgahinga Gorilla National Park (Uganda), Volcanoes National Park of Rwanda, and the Virunga National Park of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Mountain gorillas live in forests high in the mountains, at elevations of 8,000 to 13,000 feet. They have thicker fur, and more of it, compared to other great apes. The fur helps them to survive in a habitat where temperatures often close to freezing.

A few years ago, the survival of the mountain gorillas was very bleak. However, joint interstate and national conservation efforts between Uganda, DR Congo and Rwanda have seen the population grow. Bwindi has over 43% of the mountain gorillas left in the world. The newborn gorillas make an assurance of a future for the mountain gorillas.

Though demonised by movies like *King Kong* and *Congo*, the mountain gorillas are actually gentle giants. These very strong and powerful apes are actually gentle and even shy—say more like *Jungle Book*.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hg2hCuDy2wg>

Mountain gorillas don't feed on any meat, eating only plants, shoots and fruit. Red ants are their source of protein.

The struggle for the survival of the mountain gorilla first came to international attention through the work of American scientist Dian Fossey. It was through her efforts, even at the point of death, that probably, the mountain gorilla got the first step away from extinction. The movie "Gorillas in the Mist" features Fossey's work in the gorilla highlands.

Over the years, these great apes have been threatened by habitat loss, poaching and human activity. A number of conservation initiatives have been set up to support the survival of the remaining great apes. Since the 1980s numbers have risen from 600 to currently over 1000.

Female mountain gorillas give birth to one infant after a pregnancy of nearly nine months. The baby mountain gorilla, weighing anything from 1.8 kilograms (four pounds), spends the first three to four years moving around mostly on the mother's back.

By four years, the infant is fully weaned and ready to eat the main mountain gorilla diet that includes plants, roots, shoots and the occasional red ants that provide protein.

The baby gorilla will eventually grow to weigh up to 160 kg (350 lb) for the males, while the females will hit about 90 kg (200 lb). Mature males are distinguished by the silver strip on the back and thus the name Silverback. The females on the other hand have a crest of hair crowning their heads. Both male and female

mountain gorillas are covered by thick hair that keeps them warm in their cold mountainous homes in Bwindi and Mgahinga.

No mountain gorilla is kept in captivity.

That mountain gorilla populations are growing is proof of the success of community focused conservation efforts. Uganda Wildlife Authority gives 20% of the national park procedures to support community projects in education and health, among others. The projects directly benefit the communities bordering the national parks. Schools and hospitals have been built, employment provided through guiding services, and businesses by community members are growing with the tourism numbers.

## About Bwindi

Bwindi Impenetrable National Park lies in southwestern Uganda on the edge of the Rift Valley. Its mist-covered hillsides are blanketed by one of Uganda's oldest and most biologically diverse rainforests, which dates back over 25,000 years and contains almost 400 species of plants. More famously, this "impenetrable forest" also protects an estimated 400 mountain gorillas – roughly half of the world's population, including several habituated groups, which can be tracked.

This biologically diverse region also provides shelter to a further 120 mammals, including several primate species such as baboons and chimpanzees, as well as elephants and antelopes. There are around 350 species of birds hosted in this forest, including 23 Albertine Rift endemics.

In 1994, Bwindi Impenetrable National Park was inscribed on the World Heritage List. The other Uganda sites on the list are Tombs of Buganda Kings at Kasubi (2001 - cultural) and Rwenzori Mountains National Park (1994 - natural).

## Fast Facts About Mountain Gorillas

**Type:** Mammal

**Diet:** Omnivore

**Average life span:** 35 years in the wild

**Size:** Standing height, 4 to 6 ft (1.2 to 1.8 m)

**Weight:** 135 to 220 kg (300 to 485 lbs)

**Group name:** Troop or band

**Relative:** Size relative to a 6-ft (2-m) man

## About Kwezi Outdoors

Kwezi Outdoors Ltd. is a Ugandan operator focused on providing quality travel services and positive memorable experiences for our clients. We are passionate about Uganda, its friendly people, and the abundant wildlife and God-given natural heritage. We have currently suspended all tours and safaris as part of our responsibility to ensure we keep our staff and guests safe. #StayHome #StopTheSpread.

Kwezi Outdoors provides standard and personally tailored safaris for individuals and groups. We also offer services for mission trips, media tours, and educational travel. Some of our activities include wildlife game



drives, golf safaris, tracking mountain gorillas and chimps, photography safaris, hiking, mountaineering, and other adventure activities.

Any of our tours can be customised to meet your interests and budget. It is our belief that our guests can enjoy Uganda's heritage at an affordable cost without compromising the quality of the experience.

When we travel again on safari, and we shall, you will find us waiting here with a smile to welcome you to #Uganda. We will share new experiences, scale new heights in our lovely mountains, and hike to the ends of the rainbow!

For now, #StayHome #StaySafe #DontCancelPostone #Travel #StrongTogether

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