

# PEARL of AFRICA

## HOLIDAY DESTINATIONS



## RWENZORI ON SEVEN SUMMITS CHALLENGE

By Titus Kakembo

A group of nine ambitious nature lovers plans to scale Mount Rwenzori as part of the challenge to reach the seven mountain summits spread across Africa in seven weeks.

The adventure is code-named Seven Summits Africa and is to cover Mount Meru, Mount Nyiragongo, an active volcano, Mount Speke and Mount Stanley (both on Rwenzori), Mt Karisimbi and Mount Kilimanjaro.

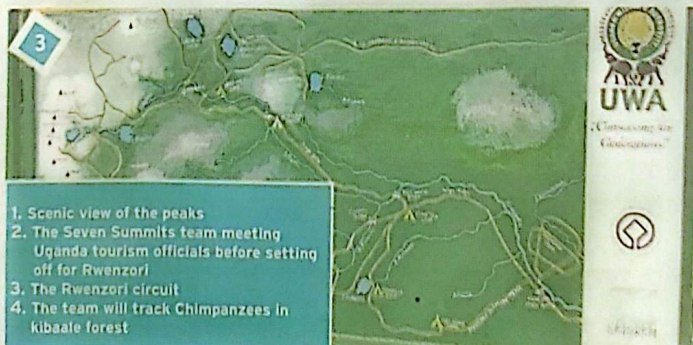
The participants are aged between 30 and 60 years, according to Carel Verhoef, one of the organisers.

"Since it commenced, we have attracted a following on social media of more than 10,000 people. The project has triggered interest in the residents of those countries," he said, adding that Kenya's cabinet secretary Najib Balala resolved to join the team as a show of support.

### EXCITEMENT

Speaking at a press conference in Entebbe on Tuesday, participants Sibusiso Vilane, Sally Grierson, Ake Lindstrom, Jessica Flint, Patrick Themes, Thomas Hart, Jacques Van Tender and Gabriella Brown were full of expectation as they anticipated Uganda's highest mountain, Rwenzori.

Brown, 60, chose to enjoy the Uganda summer-like warmth and sleeping early to prepare for the challenge, knowing how cold it gets on



1. Scenic view of the peaks
2. The Seven Summits team meeting Uganda tourism officials before setting off for Rwenzori
3. The Rwenzori circuit
4. The team will track chimpanzees in Kibaale forest

the mountain. Asked about their expectations, photographer Hart said he was eager to capture every second of their expedition. He looked forward to getting to know the personality of Mount

Rwenzori and shooting the different vegetation types, all the way to the Margherita peak.

The Great Lakes Safaris Uganda executive director, Amos Wekesa, says the team is spending 16 days in Uganda

and will be treated to a lot more than Mount Rwenzori.

"We have a diversity of attractions that will interest any sophisticated traveller in the world," Wekesa said.

"Besides the 1,070 birds, The Big Five and the Source of

### FREE ADVERTISEMENT

After the expedition, the team will publish a book and produce a video to tell the rest of the world about the virgin attractions that Africa is endowed with.

"You cannot believe there are people in Europe, who think Africa has no mountains," noted cinematographer Jacques Van Tender.

"The onus is on us to boost the volume of tourists to Africa. This will in turn create jobs for tour operators, guides and hoteliers, besides taxes to the governments. That is what we call responsible tourism," he added.

The team was expected to be at Speke summit by Saturday. Their itinerary will feature chimpanzee stalking in Kibaale National Park on December 1 and to crown it, tracking gorillas in Bwindi Impenetrable Forest on December 3.



The Nile, they will also see the primates and reptiles."

### DIVERSITY

Uganda Tourist Board (UTB) chief executive officer, Stephen Asimwe, informed the adventurers that while in Uganda, they could meet more than 60 diverse cultures, track gorillas and scale heights

"Tell us what we can do better to attract more visitors and have them stay here longer," he said, adding that UTB targets four million tourists from abroad by 2020, in addition to triggering the interest of more domestic travellers. UTB also aims to perfect the chain of services in the industry.