



Facts about Kibiro hot springs

BY DAPHINE NAKABIRI

- 1.** Kibiro hot springs are earth-heated water springs found on the western shores of Lake Albert in Hoima District in Uganda.
- 2.** These are part of the Rift Valley geothermal system, where underground heat warms groundwater, causing it to surface as hot springs.
- 3.** The springs have very warm waters, which can reach temperatures high enough to boil small amounts of water naturally.

4. Kibiro hot springs are found near Kibiro salt villages in an area known for its rich salt deposits, which for many years, local communities have harvested salt using traditional methods. The name "Kibiro" thus comes from local languages and is closely linked to this long-standing salt-making tradition.

5. Besides salt, the waters of Kibiro hot springs contain minerals such as sulphur, which gives the springs a distinctive smell. Although these minerals are believed by local communities to have healing and relaxing properties, sulphur is used

to make fertilizers, skin-care products and sometimes used to control insects and plant diseases in farms.

6. Around the springs, there are big rocks and natural steps created by minerals that the hot water left behind over time. These features give the site a unique appearance making it a fascinating place for visitors.

7. While the springs are surrounded by savanna vegetation and scattered trees, coupled together with the warm water and minerals in the area, these create a small special habitat where birds, insects, and

small animals thrive.

8. With the ongoing salt extraction at Kibiro hot springs, this has supported local livelihoods especially for the women, as the salt is traditionally traded across the region. This has made Kibiro an important centre of commerce long before modern markets existed.

9. During the salt production process, instead of mining, women use a unique method which involves spreading soil over salty, sun-heated ground, letting it absorb salt via capillary action, then filtering (leaching) the salt from the soil and boiling the brine into salt cones.

10. There are several local beliefs and folklore surround the springs. Some communities consider the hot waters sacred and associate them with spirits or ancestral protection, and these perform rituals near the site for blessings or healing.

11. Today, Kibiro hot springs attracts tourists, researchers, and nature enthusiasts. Visitors flock the place to see the steaming waters, explore the salt terraces, observe wildlife, and learn about traditional salt-making techniques.

12. However, conservation efforts are important for the site, as human activity, unsustainable salt harvesting, and changes in water flow could affect the springs and the surrounding ecosystem. Protecting the springs ensures they remain a natural, cultural, and educational resource for future generations.

Ochuku

By Mbugu