

Where to go chimp tracking in Uganda

BY ERIC NTALO

BUDONGO FOREST: It is home to more than 600 chimpanzees and three groups of habituated chimpanzee communities, Sonso, Walbira and Kanlyo-Pabidi. The moist, semi-deciduous tropical forest located at the top of the

Albertine Rift is classified as a central forest reserve and comprises 435 square kilometres of continuous forest cover; a large forest by Ugandan standards. The forest borders Murchison Falls National Park. Chimp tracking costs \$50 (Shs182,000) for nationals.



A tourist watches a chimpanzee in Budongo forest reserve.



Dr Jane Goodall takes part in feeding chimpanzees at Ngamba Island sanctuary. COURTESY PHOTO.

NGAMBA ISLAND: It is 100 acres of land located on Lake Victoria, 23 kilometres south-east of Entebbe mainland. The island boasts of 95 acres tropical forest that provides home to orphaned and rescued chimpanzees. Ngamba is approximately 30 minutes by boat to get to the serene island and the jetty departure point is about seven minutes drive from Entebbe International Airport. Chimp tracking costs \$88 (Shs320,000).

70,000

CHARGE IN (SHS) FOR CHIMP TRACKING AT KYAMBURA GORGE

CHALLENGES OF PRIMATE TOURISM

According to Lilly Ajarova, Executive Director of the Chimpanzee Trust, primates are at risk from:

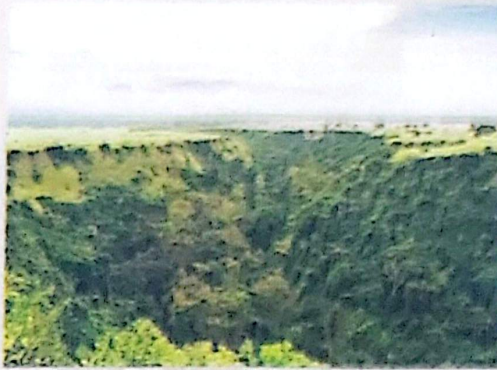
- Loss of habitat and fragmentation (Chimps move through multiple habitats covering several kilometres to reach distant forests. Fragmented land makes movement difficult)
- Snares: (Snares are made from strong wires and as chimps walk in the forest, their hands are trapped)
- Poaching and hunting (chimp meat is fed to hunting dogs and for some people, it is a delicacy)
- Land clearing for agriculture, timber and human settlement. Forest clearing in Uganda is estimated at two per cent loss every year. These are habitats of primates.

KALINZU: This is a natural forest in Bushenyi District of Western Uganda. It lies on top of an escarpment on the eastern edge of the Great Albertine Rift Valley and the forest reserve is 147 square kilometres adjacent to Queen Elizabeth National Park and the Maragamba forest.

Kalinzu has six species of primates including the Blue Monkeys, Black and White Colobus Monkeys, chimpanzees and Vervet monkeys. The area has more than 70 habituated chimpanzees, hence ideal for chimp tracking. Tracking rates are issued by the National Forestry Authority.

KYAMBURA GORGE: Also known as Valley of Apes is located in Queen Elizabeth National Park. It is famous for its sunken forest and chimpanzees. Kyambura has other types of primates including the Red-tailed monkey, Black and white Colobus and Vervet monkeys. It is 410km from Kampala to Kyambura

through Fort Portal. There are also charter flights available from Entebbe International Airport to the Airstrip in southwestern Uganda at Mweya. Flight time is less than 60 minutes. Chimp tracking for foreigners is \$50 (Shs182,000) and Shs70,000 for East African nationals.



Above: Kyambura Gorge can be reached by air from Entebbe International Airport to Mweya in South Western Uganda. NET PHOTO

KIBALE FOREST: Located South of Fort Portal, Kibale Forest is believed to contain the highest concentration of primate species (13 species) in East Africa. These include; chimpanzees, Black and white Colobus monkeys, Red Colobus monkeys, Blue monkeys and baboons.

Tracking to the habituated the chimp troops is conducted by trained guides who will also tell you about the forest in general. The group of chimps in Kanyanchu community is probably

the largest in Kibale Forest. As you search for Kibale's resident chimpanzees, look out for other primates such as Grey-Cheeked mangabeys. The guide will share the secrets of the forest's flora and fauna.

Kibale Forest is 75km from Fort Portal Town. It can also be accessed via the airstrip in Tooro-Semliki Wildlife Reserve, 86 km from Kanyanchu. Tracking costs Shs100,000 for East Africans and \$150 (Shs547,000) for foreigners.



Kibale Forest is thought to have the highest concentration of primate species in East Africa.



Kalinzu forest reserve is home to six species of primates. NET PHOTO.

If I had to be somewhere in Uganda right now, it would definitely be...



RIPON FALLS: Located in Jinja along the Nile, the site of the former Ripon falls give you an eye-catching view of the fresh waters of the Nile. I would want to be at the falls because of the silent atmosphere that surrounds the falls. The swirling of the waters is also pleasing to look at for relaxation.

ENOCK GGALABUZI, ENTREPRENEUR



REPTILE VILLAGE, ENTEBBE: Visiting the village gives me a chance to engage in eco-tourism and also appreciate the value in protecting wildlife. The village is home to many reptile species ranging from cobras, boomslangs, skinks, monitor lizards, tortoises and the deadly Baboon Viper.

SHEENAH NANKABIRWA, NURSE



KILEMBE MINES: I only used to read about the copper mines but when I went on a tour, I found that the mines are tucked among breathtaking highlands with high elephant grass that adds mystery to the place. River Nyamwamba gives the mines a cool atmosphere. Coupled with their rich history, the mines are worth a visit.

AHMED KALULE, SOCIAL WORKER



BUSITEMA FOREST: I would spend time in Busitema forest in order to see baboons, monkeys, birds and various tree species. The forest is also suitable for camping and hunting. A simple tour would bring me up close with different tree species. The forest vegetation is delightful for nature lovers.

SCOVIA NASSANGA, STUDENT

Compiled by Godfrey Lugaaju