

KAPCHORWA

ATARI FALLS ARE A BREATAKING MUST-SEE

BY UMAR NSUBUGA

If the last time you were on an expedition in Kapchorwa district, and you were only shown the town, then it was unfortunate because you were cheated of a richer experience.

A friend who works and lives in Kapchorwa invited me to visit him. I had to go 286km east of Kampala.

My friend told me of a beautiful place called Atari Falls in Kapchesombe village where he stays.

"Atari Falls are a cluster of three separate breathtaking points," Isaac Malinga, my friend and tour guide for the day, said as we set off on a bodaboda.

It was fascinating to learn that the falls, visible from Kapchesombe village, are the least imposing in height and spectacle.

After a long trek on the main access road off the highway, we suddenly turned to a narrow winding footpath. It ended on the edge of a considerably steep terrain and then we descended about 30 feet below, climbing down an improvised access ladder made out of timber planks.

"There is no designated route to this site as it lies on private property," Malinga explained.

By the time we reached our destination, we were tired and drenched in sweat, but what came into view was delightful.

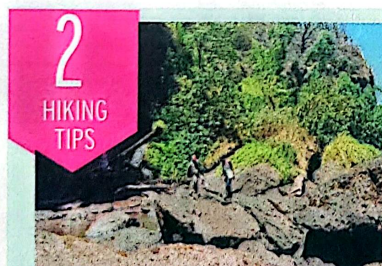
A vast escarpment rose from where we stood and stretched heavenward as far as our eyes could see. The terrain of this part of the countryside is a composition of numerous hills and valleys, all gracefully covered with lush green vegetation.

GETTING TO WATER

We were soon among huge trees, trudging slowly uphill, walking with the help of sticks like old people, but sweating rivers. The water is icy.

By the time we got out of the water, we were so full of energy and we went ahead of the boys who were guiding us. We were only a few metres from the foot of the falls.

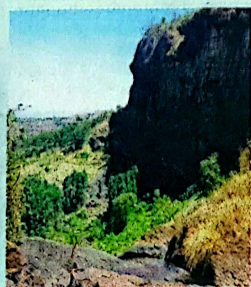
There are routes to manoeuvre and rocks to climb. But remember we were drenched like sailors in a storm. So it was hard. And slow. But



2 HIKING TIPS

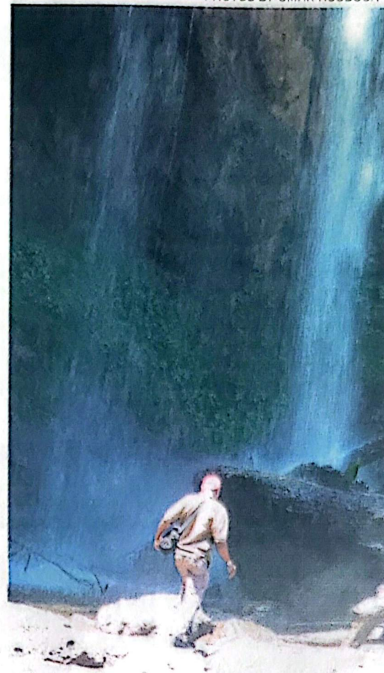
THE RIGHT GEAR

There is no clear path to the falls, so one has to get boots with a good grip, because you have to climb rocks and trees.



THE CLIMB
It is a long and grueling climb uphill, but the view is worth it and the descent is easier. It is also worth it reaching the foot of the falls.

PHOTOS BY UMAR NSUBUGA



The waterfalls are steep and seemingly from the sky

the destination was so close. So we climbed rocks with all our strength, as if the devil himself was chasing us.

Finally, our efforts paid off. We reached the clearing right at the foot of the cliff, at the pool into which the water falls.

Five minutes away from the river bank, you will hear the roaring strength of the falls. Strong and loud they come, yet in their thunderous nature they are a beauty to marvel at.

At some point, the falls are so sweetly ferocious that water will be spraying on your face. According to Malinga, the full trekking circuit to the peak takes almost a whole day. The nature walks allow you to see flora and fauna alongside enormous caves, gorges and cold springs.

TREASURE IN THE CAVE

We continued on our journey, treading eastwards on the edge of the escarpment through a narrow track. We were heading for the most towering of the water falls. Along the way, we were compelled to stop and witness another historical feature – a natural cave that has since become a habitat for thousands of bats.

ON TOP OF THE HILLS

Malinga let me know that he, too did not know the way to the other waterfalls we had gone to see. By this time we can see the waterfalls over 10km away, hurtling down a high cliff, as if from the clouds.

We were soon in a clearing of arable land. Hills and hills of fertile land and yet no crops in sight, save for a few malnourished cabbages tended by a lady in her middle age.

After that short rest, we were back in a thick bush on a mountainside so steep you had to tag at the bushes for support. But the little boys told us to be careful lest we fall down and no one could get our bodies, because it is deep down.