

By Isaac Nuwagaba

In an effort to improve tourism in Mgahinga and Bwindi national parks, the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) and the water ministry have partnered to build a modern trail that will ease access to the area's mountain peaks.

Currently, tourists spend over four days to fully access the major points of the park.

The target is to reduce the experience to one day through a \$148m (sh444b) World Bank-funded Investing in Forests and Protected Areas for Climate-Smart Development (IFPA-CD) project. The project will be implemented by the water ministry as the lead agency, together with UWA.

Richard Muhabwe Rugyenda, the UWA warden for Mgahinga and Bwindi Conservation Areas, said the new trail will connect the three peaks with resting shelters, boardwalks and ladders. The three peaks are Mt Sabinyo (3,669 metres above sea level), Mt Gahinga (3,474m) and Mt Muhabura (4,127m).

"Mgahinga is 33.7 square kilometres and rugged. Tourists

Sh400b trail to reduce hiking time in Mgahinga, Bwindi

PHOTO BY ISAAC NUWAGABA

who wanted to summit all three peaks needed at least four days with overnight camping. This new trail will make it possible for them to safely do the circuit in two to three days," Rugyenda said during a site inspection on Saturday.

Sabinyo, famous for its jagged summit where Uganda, Rwanda and DR Congo share borders, requires scrambling over sharp ridges.

"Mt Mgahinga offers a relatively easy six-hour hike, featuring a 180m-wide caldera swamp at its peak and it is a premier spot for seeing bamboo vegetation, golden monkeys and the rare Nyakagezi gorilla group," Rugyenda explained.

While addressing journalists at Bwindi Information Centre on Saturday, Rugyenda explained that the new infrastructure addresses the most time-consuming sections.

"We are installing ladders on the steepest rock faces of Sabinyo, board-walks across the fragile alpine bogs and resting

Tourists on a nature walk in Bwindi National Park recently



shelters at strategic points between peaks. This protects the vegetation and gives hikers safe places to acclimatise.

"If we can give them golden monkey tracking, gorilla trekking and three volcanoes in three days instead of five, we become competitive," he said.

Apart from the trail, a picnic

site is being constructed at Munyaga in Bwindi, Kanungu district.

The Munyaga picnic site will open in July.

"Mgahinga is no longer a park you pass through. It is a park where you stay. With golden monkeys in the morning, Sabinyo at midday and a sunset

over Muhabura, the Virungas will give you the best three days of your life," Rugyenda said.

Thembo Sekarombi Manase, the manager of AMIGO construction company, which is undertaking the works, said the site will have bandas, toilets and signage detailing the

park's biodiversity and will be completed in July 2026.

The water and environment senior public relations officer, Noel Muhangi, said the project will also create livelihood projects for communities around protected areas.

"We shall plant bamboo and indigenous trees on 1,200 hectares of degraded land around Mgahinga and Bwindi national parks to reduce human-wildlife conflict and improve watershed protection," he said.

Construction of the three-peak trail is 65% complete, with commissioning expected in March 2027.

Mgahinga, just like Bwindi, hosts over 76 mammal species and 180 bird species.

While Mgahinga has one gorilla group, Bwindi Impenetrable National Park in neighbouring Kanungu and Kisoro districts hosts nearly half of the world's roughly 1,000 remaining mountain gorillas.