

## DISCOVER

## ATARI FALLS ARE A BEAUTY TO MARVEL AT

BY UMAR NSUBUGA

If the last time you were in Kapchorwa district you were only shown the town, you were cheated of a richer experience. A friend who works and stays in Kapchorwa invited me for a visit. I had to move 286km from Kampala to the eastern part of the country.

My friend had told me of a beautiful place called Atari falls, I thought he meant Sipi Falls, until I reached 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.

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 branched onto a narrow winding footpath. It ended on the edge of a considerably steep terrain 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 so tired and our bodies were drenched in sweat, but what came in 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 are now in the huge trees trudging slowly uphill, walking with the help of sticks. When we reached the Atari falls, we jumped into the water to cool off and regain some energy for the last leg. By the time we got out of the water, we are so full of energy that we go ahead of the boys. We were only a few metres to the foot of the falls.

There are routes to manoeuvre and rocks to climb. The climb is hard and slow. But the destination is so close.

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 shore, we could hear the roaring strength of the falls. Strong and loud they came onto you yet in their thunderous nature, they are a beauty to marvel at.

According to Malinga, the trek takes almost the whole day. The nature walks allow one to see flora and fauna, the 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.

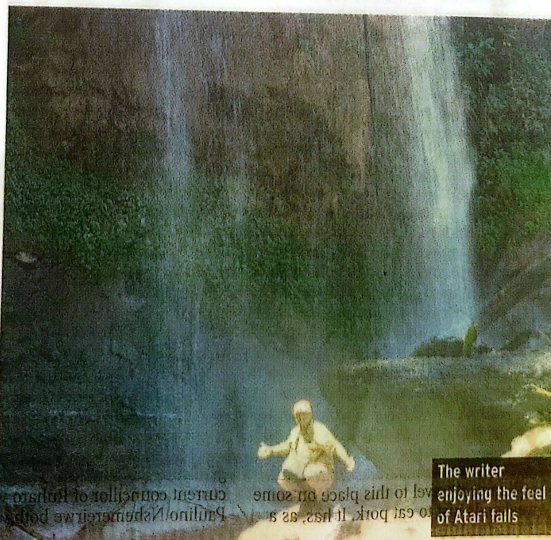
"Before civilisation, the cave that is so deep was shelter to the Sabyin community," Malinga explains.

## ON TOP OF THE HILLS

We could see the waterfalls, a few kilometres away, hurtling down a high cliff, as if from the clouds.

We are soon in a clearing of arable land. There were hills and hills of fertile land and yet no crops in sight, save for a few malnourished cabbages and on the farm is a lady in her middle age. She lived there with her children.

Her small house does not have a door. She is sitting in a shed in her compound. After that short rest, we were back in a thick bush on a mountainside so steep you want to tag at the bushes for support. But the little boys told us to be careful, that if anyone fell, chances of survival were limited, let alone people getting the body.



The writer enjoying the feel of Atari falls