life

Sunday Monitor
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TRAVEL

SIGHTS IN QUEEN ELIZABETH NATIONAL PARK > By Justine Juliet Rukundo



elephant of the road
Driving through the Katunguru Gate to Mweya Peninsula, you will likely run into several elephants crossing the road from the water channel or see them browsing the shrubs by the roadside. Such sights keep one appreciative of nature and the wild.



antelopes of the road
On the Kasese-Mbarara Road, in the early morning or late afternoon, one is likely to encounter the beautiful scene of tens or hundreds of impala crossing the road. The sight is great. The antelopes are graceful and beautiful.



tourists on the move
The tourist buses hit the game track as early as 6am to be able to catch game as they wake up and start the arduous of looking for food and surviving the predators. Open ground seem to be the safest for small animals such as antelopes.

Kazinga Channel is nothing but paradise

ADVENTURE. Driving hundreds of kilometres is wasteful if you are going to miss out on the beauty of nature. **JUSTINE JULIET RUKUNDO** writes about her trip to Kazinga Channel.



There are several bird species in the Kazinga Channel. NET PHOTO.

One of the things always said about paradise is that it a state of nature where all animals (destructive man inclusive) live in harmony, each going about their business without fear of the other, and all living off God's natural endowments - fruits, fish, water, and abundant sunshine!

This can only be imagined - whether in the movies or in children's Bible stories - for in the real state of nature, at least from the perspective of English philosopher Thomas Hobbes, life is nasty, short and brutish; it is constant war of one against all and all against one.

With those two contradicting accounts of nature, now imagine showing up at a waterside somewhere in Uganda and behold a buffalo lying by the shore taking a rest after a long grazing day while others drink water. Then, a hippopotamus wandering next to the buffalo, another rolling itself in the muddy pond nearby while another is busy plucking out the short grass nearby. Then imagine a big elephant standing in the middle of all these animals, it too drinking water as another ambles away from the water front.

Then look further ashore into the nearby thickets and behold the waterbuck browsing at the short shrubs, and different species of birds flying about or resting on the elephant, buffalo or hippopotamus. Then, see one man bathing astride away from a school of hippos and another man standing by his shack while right in front of him, a hippo is grazing nonchalantly. Think again about paradise and remember that you are in one of Uganda's national parks!

WHAT YOU OUGHT TO KNOW...
At the lodge were nine twin rooms and two triple rooms all en-suite, two family cottages each with two bedrooms, a common living room, one extra bed and a shared bathroom, a private camp site (carry own camping equipment).

Game

That is the sight that greeted me when I took a boat ride on Kazinga Channel in Queen Elizabeth National Park (QENP) early this year. Of course there were no lions, leopards, hyenas and crocodiles by the waterside going about their day unbothered by the abundant prey around, which would have completed the picture of paradise. It nonetheless turned out to be the closest one would ever see of paradise.

The journey to QENP started from the messy Kampala traffic jam that only saw me hit the open road after 8pm. The drive to Fort Portal was dark and uneventful. But waking up in the enchanting Fort Portal town that is flanked by the charming Rwenzori Mountains to the west and small beautiful hills all round was enough compensation for the 300km drive.

Fort Portal to Kasese

The drive from Fort Portal down to Kasese was marvellous as the road literally runs along the Rwenzori, its lush green vegetation nourishing the eyes and giving off very fresh air. The numerous road turns and ridges felt like intimate hugs that make this beautiful mountain, the third highest range in Africa.

The stop was at Simba Safari Camp. A budget lodge, whose ambience and food is first class. Located at the edge of the national park, the lodge is a good launch pad for the tour of the wild. From the lodge, one has a great view of the salty Lake Kikorongo and the wilderness beyond.

After a very fulfilling one-day tour of the park, hitting the road back to Kampala - this time through Bushenyi and Mbarara - was a good decision as the drive up the Rift Valley escarpment is a story of its own.

