

CNN puts Uganda's gorillas, River Nile into global spotlight

By Gerald Tenywa

Uganda has shot into the global spotlight for the right reasons - its wild beauties and unique travel experiences have caught the attention of the Cable News Network (CNN).

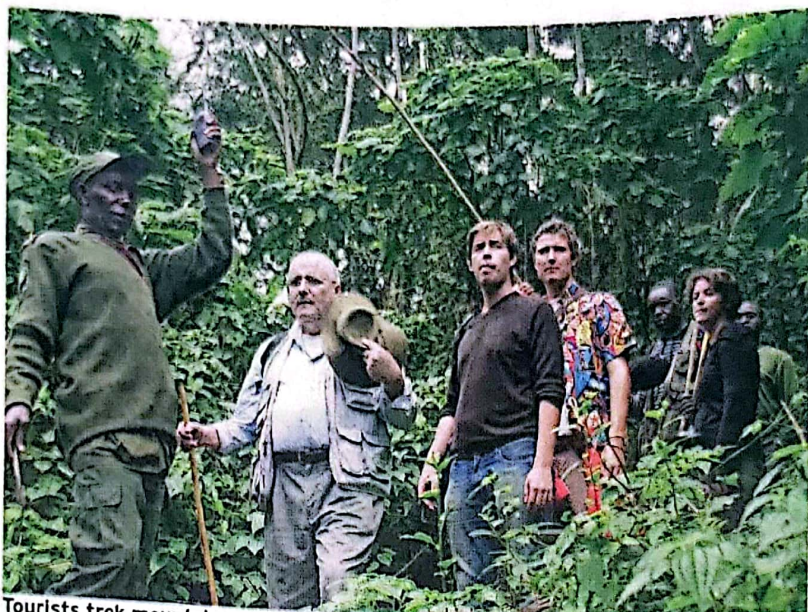
The US-based television was running a 30-minute documentary about Uganda on its *Inside Africa* show over the weekend, with repeats expected today (Tuesday) and tomorrow (Wednesday).

In the documentary, Uganda is described as a country of unrivalled beauty. It has the savannah parks populated with wild animals, tropical high forests, the semi-arid landscapes, the highest mountains covered with snow and also shares the largest water bodies - Lake Victoria while River Nile, the longest river in the world starts its journey to the Mediterranean Sea from Jinja in Uganda.

Uganda's story is told through Uganda's bloggers, Solomon Oleny and David Ogutu as well as Amos Wekesa, a tour operator. It highlights the endangered species, such as elephants in Murchison Falls National Park and Mountain Gorillas in western Uganda.

"God cut a piece of Eden and 'threw' it here," said Oleny as he described the incredible beauty of Murchison Falls, which is one of the stunning beauties highlighted in the CNN documentary about Uganda.

Oleny was standing at Murchison Falls, where



Tourists trek mountain gorillas in Bwindi National Park in South western Uganda

SPECTACULAR BEAUTY

Oleny was standing at Murchison Falls, where River Nile squeezes through a narrow cleft and gushes through it with a thunderous sound. On a good sunny day, the water splashes through and forms a rainbow.

River Nile squeezes through a narrow cleft and gushes through it with a thunderous sound. On a good sunny day, the rushing water forms a

rainbow over the falls. Many pleasure hunters describe it as a spectacle at the heart of Murchison Falls National Park.

The documentary also highlights the Nile as it gets out of Lake Victoria and the wild sports, such as rafting, where people ride on the rapids created by the rocks.

The documentary also highlighted Oleny walking in southwestern Uganda, in the shadows of the eye-catching endangered Mountain Gorillas that live in Uganda's Bwindi Impenetrable National Park.

About half of the global population of mountain gorillas estimated at 880 lives in Bwindi. The remaining

population is shared by Uganda's Mgahinga and neighbouring Rwanda, as well as DR Congo.

Commenting on social media, Mazingira Yetu said, "Oleny you nailed it...Uganda has its challenges, but we can fill it with positivity on the social media."

Another group known as Koi Koi, led by Ogutu, tells stories from different parts of Uganda culture. They said they were inspired by riddles in central Uganda that began with the words *koi koi*.

Dr Andrew Seguya, the executive director of Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), said Uganda's parks were among

the best in Africa because they are not overcrowded.

CNN told the story about Uganda, following accolades by different reputable travel guides, including *Rough Guides*, who ranked Uganda as the top fourth destination intending travellers should visit in 2017. Bwindi is on the 2017 CNN list of best parks in Africa. In 2016, Kidepo Valley National Park was on the 2016 CNN best parks in Africa.

Last week, National Geographic Channel named Queen Elizabeth National Park in western Uganda among the seven natural wonders of Africa.

Uganda was the top tourism destination in the region in the 1960s, but suffered in the times of civil unrest and political turmoil in the 1970s and 1980s.

Tourism is now Uganda's top foreign exchange earner. The increased earnings from the tourism sector from \$6.5m in 1986 to \$1.4b in 2015 and contributing 10% to Uganda's GDP means the sector is a big priority when it comes to economic growth, according to the Prime Minister, Dr Ruhakana Rugunda.

The sector created at least 1.172 million direct and indirect jobs in 2015, making it the largest service employer in the country, according to Rugunda. He said there is need to increase tourism's contribution to the national economy, in order to realise the Government's vision 2020, which looks at transforming the country into a middle-income state.