



**VICTOR EMANUEL NATURE TOURS**

**ITINERARY**

**Victor Emanuel Nature Tours  
Presents:**

**A Special Departure for the Cornell Lab of Ornithology**

**UGANDA: GORILLAS, CHIMPANZEES & SHOEBILLS**

**MARCH 7–25, 2026**

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**Shoebill © Anne-Marie Harris/Macaulay Library at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology**

**Located in the Nile Basin in the heart of East Africa, Uganda is a beautiful country where savannas, rainforests, lakes, and volcanic highlands converge. It is also among the world's premier destinations for birds and wildlife. Where else but in this impossibly lush country can one observe Lions prowling the open plains in the morning and on the same day track Chimpanzees through the jungle undergrowth in the afternoon? Where else but here can one navigate tropical rivers teeming with Hippopotamus and huge Nile Crocodiles before setting off into the misty mountains to stare deep into the eyes of a Mountain Gorilla? Offering experiences like these and more, Uganda is perhaps the ultimate safari destination.**

**Arranged exclusively for the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, this very special departure presents a one-of-a-kind opportunity to experience Uganda, the country Winston Churchill called the "Pearl of Africa." Hosting this trip will be Ian Owens and Mary Guthrie from the Lab. Guiding our activities will be Barry Lyon from Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, a respected organization with a long history of collaboration with the Lab, and Herbert Byaruhanga and local guides from Bird Uganda Safaris.**



**Mountain Gorilla © Onyx**

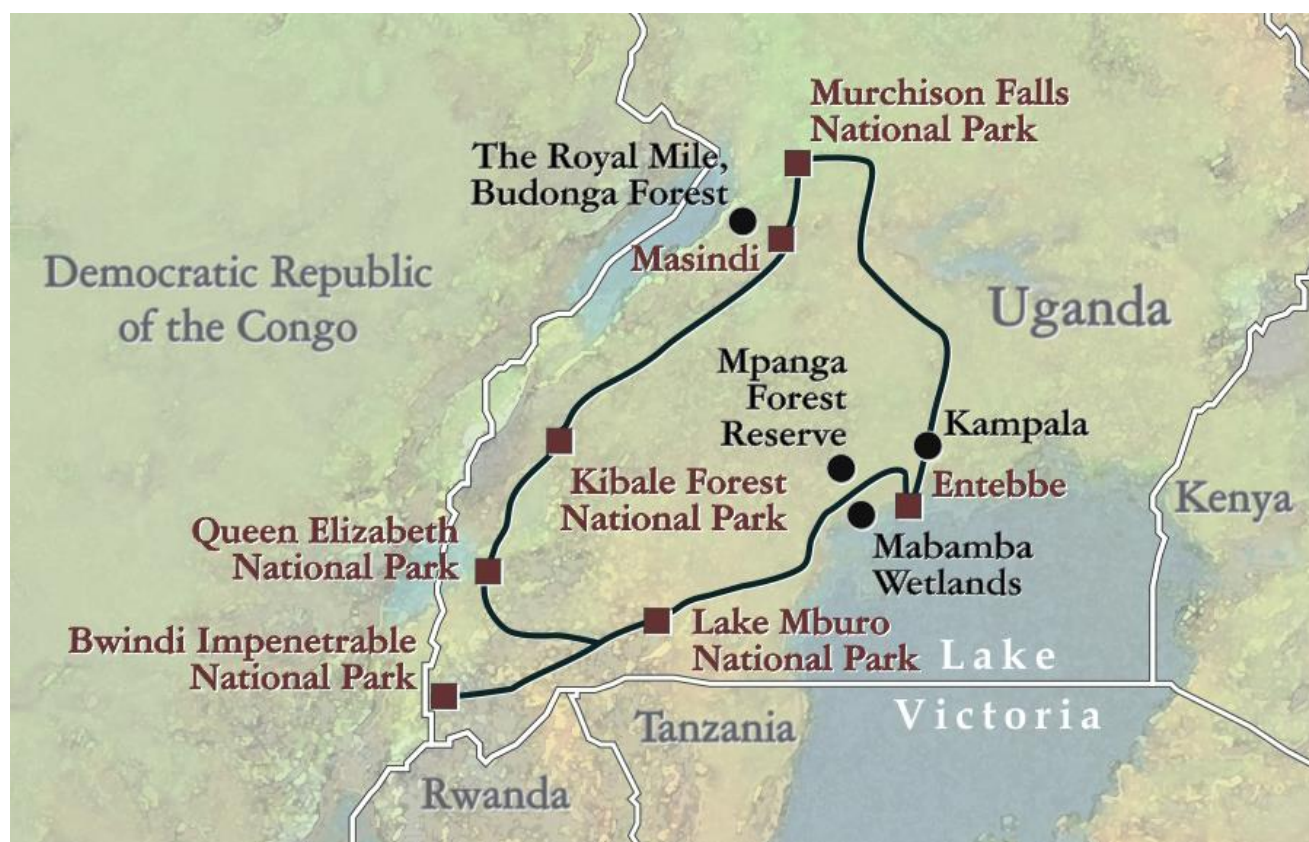
**This trip is designed for those who seek a highlights-style tour of this fascinating country. While observing Gorillas, Chimpanzees, and the Shoebill are priorities, we will witness a huge diversity of birds and mammals. Starting in Entebbe, we will trace a circuit through the southern and western portions of the country, visiting some of the most famous and best-known destinations in East Africa including Lake Victoria and the national parks of Lake Mburo, Bwindi Impenetrable Forest, Queen Elizabeth, and Murchison Falls. We have**



chances to see both Leopard and Lion, and we will encounter herds of African Elephant, Giraffe, Hippopotamus, Cape Buffalo, Zebra, and a tremendous diversity of hoofed mammals and primates. The birding is extraordinarily diverse with parrots, kingfishers, bee-eaters, turacos, bustards, trogons, hornbills, and an array of dazzling sunbirds and weavers leading the charge. Beyond our field excursions, we will also learn about the biodiversity significance of East Africa's equatorial rainforests and how the Lab's work may contribute to their preservation.

Uganda is safe and friendly. As a country it has undergone substantial changes in recent decades. Infrastructure improvements to the roads, lodges, and development programs for the local guides have made wildlife touring in Uganda one of the best experiences possible in the natural history world.

This trip is bound to be a superb birding and wildlife experience. But it's more than that, too: this singular natural history event is a chance to see old friends and make new ones, to learn the latest from the Cornell Lab, and to enjoy an amazing adventure in the heart of East Africa.



*While Cornell is pleased to facilitate travel opportunities for its alumni and friends with tour operators that specialize in high-quality educational travel, please be aware that Cornell does not conduct, manage or operate these travel experiences, or act as an agent for travelers interested in tours. Tour operators and travelers are responsible for making their own safety decisions concerning this travel, and, as a facilitator between travelers and the*

***tour operators with whom travelers make arrangements for completing travel, Cornell's role and liability are strictly limited.***

***Specific tour operator and national health and safety protocols will apply to each trip, and travelers should review all protocols and trip terms and conditions, including terms and conditions regarding cancellations, refunds, health and safety, and insurance prior to making a reservation. Cornell is not responsible for changes to trips or travel arrangements or for losses or additional expenses resulting from travel.***

**March 7–8, Days 1-2: Travel to Uganda; Arrival in Entebbe.** Tour participants should make plans to arrive in Entebbe (airport code EBB) no later than the evening of March 8. Upon arrival and clearing immigration and customs, you will be met by a representative of our ground operator and transferred to the **Protea Hotel Entebbe** where a room has been reserved in your name.

The Protea Hotel Entebbe is a four-star luxury resort hotel set on the banks of Lake Victoria. Featuring spacious and well-appointed rooms, the hotel is a perfect place to unwind following the lengthy international flight to Uganda.

This evening, we will convene in the hotel (specific location to be announced) at 5:30 p.m. for a welcome reception and the chance to meet with your fellow travelers and trip leaders. Dinner will follow at 6:30. After dinner, we will enjoy a short presentation outlining the events of the coming days.

Those desiring more time to rest after the long travel time to Uganda are strongly encouraged to arrive into Entebbe on or before March 7. Upon request, VENT will be happy to assist with extra arrangements such as additional nights and transfers.

NIGHTS: Aboard international aircraft (March 7)  
Protea Hotel Entebbe (March 8)

**March 9, Day 3: Mabamba wetlands and Botanical Gardens Entebbe.** After breakfast we will head out to Mabamba Wetlands, about 50 kilometers from Entebbe on the shores of Lake Victoria. This is one of the few remaining large swamps in the country protected by the local communities. This extensive papyrus swamp with its labyrinth of channels and lagoons is classified as an IBA (Important Bird Area) by Birdlife International. It is home to several pairs of Shoebills—Uganda's most famous avian resident. This charismatic species, the only representative in its family, is certainly among the most sought-after birds in Africa and we will make a special effort today to find it. We will board boats and navigate the vegetation lined channels seeking the Shoebill in addition to a selection of classic East African waterbirds: Yellow-billed Duck, Black Crane, Gray Crowned-Crane, African Jacana, Long-tailed Cormorant, Pink-backed Pelican, Goliath Heron, African Fish-Eagle, and Malachite Kingfisher. There is also a host of more local species such as Long-toed Lapwing, Blue-headed Coucal, Blue-breasted Bee-eater, Papyrus Gonolek and with luck, the rare Montane Blue Swallow.

After some hoped-for success with the Shoebill, followed by lunch, we will return to Entebbe for a break. Those who so desire may take the remainder of the afternoon off. For those who desire more time in the field, we will offer an afternoon visit to the Botanical Gardens Entebbe. Also known as the National Botanical Gardens, this scenic location, originally laid out in 1898, is filled with gardens and big trees that attract large numbers of spectacular birds. We will have time to wander the grounds and paths through the

facility, watching for such crowd pleasers as Great Blue Turaco, Eastern Plantain-eater, Black-and-white casqued Hornbill, and Gray Parrot. We have a chance for the elusive Bat Hawk and scarce Orange Weaver.



**African Fish-Eagle © Nani Sainz © Macaulay Library at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology**

NIGHT: Protea Hotel Entebbe

**March 10, Day 4: Drive to Lake Mburo.** Our ultimate destination today is Igongo Country Hotel & Cultural Centre, southwest of Entebbe near Lake Mburo National Park. Our plan is to make the drive over the course of the day with stops for birding and lunch en route.

Departing Entebbe after breakfast, our first stop will be at Mpanga Central Forest Reserve, a 1,200-acre sanctuary that protects a remnant patch of equatorial rainforest. Formerly private property, the forest has been protected by the Ugandan Government since 1953 and, among other things, serves as a scientific research site. This area is a good location for observing a range of elusive birds, such as White-spotted Flufftail, Congo Pied Hornbill, Fire-crested Alethe, and the shy Green-backed Twinspot.

Heading south and crossing the equator (with a photo stop!), we will make a stop at Kaku Swamp. This extensive wetland represents important aquatic habitat in central Uganda, and is a productive location for a variety of waterfowl including attractive species Spur-winged Goose, White-faced and Fulvous whistling-ducks, and Blue-billed Teal. Other standout birds that may be seen here are the beautiful Saddle-billed Stork and equally lovely Lilac-breasted Roller—two of East Africa’s most iconic birds.

We will arrive at our accommodation in the late afternoon.



NIGHT: Igongo Country Hotel & Cultural Centre, Mbarara

**March 11, Day 5: Lake Mburo National Park.** After an early breakfast, we'll drive eastward about 40 minutes to Lake Mburo National Park.

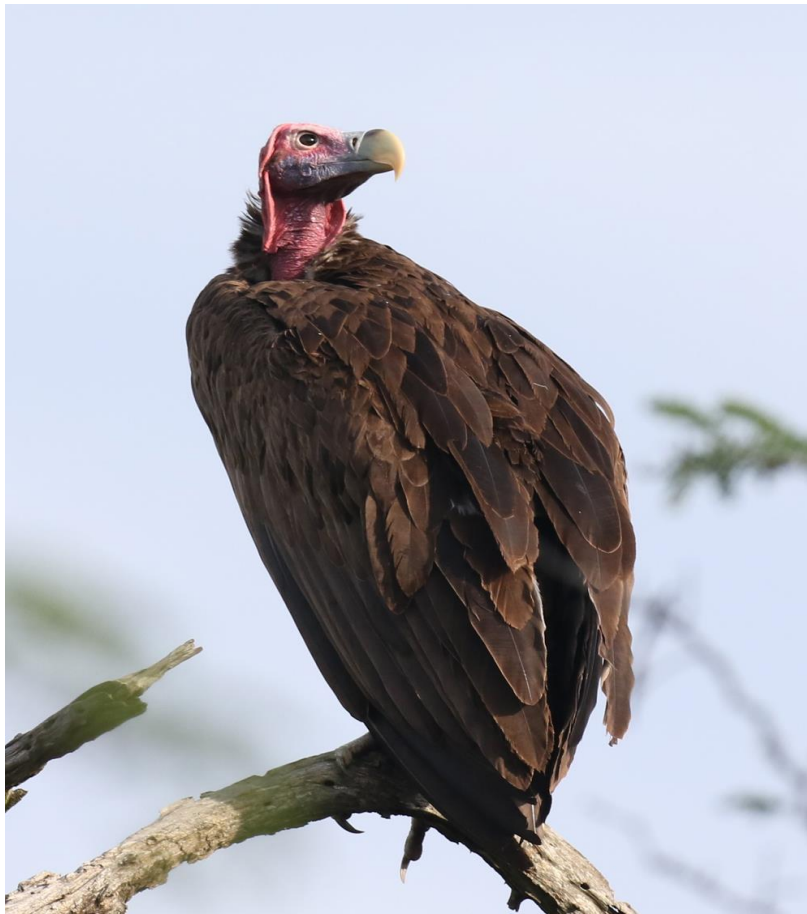
Lake Mburo is a superb wetland and Acacia-savanna sanctuary situated in southern Uganda. Lake Mburo itself is the primary feature of the park, but in fact, the lake is part of a chain-of-lakes complex that forms a super-wetland system 50 kilometers long. The birding and mammal-watching here is delightful, and with great scenery presents an experience unique from that of the other reserves we will visit on our trip.



**"Rothschild's" Giraffe © Steve Hilty**

This park is the best place in the country to see mammals such as Eland, Topi, and Impala. Also here are Rothschild's Giraffe—a rang-restricted race of the Nubian or Northern Giraffe—and the Grant's race of Plains Zebra. The lakes within the park are home to Hippopotamus and Nile Crocodiles and a variety of waterbirds, while fringing swamps hide secretive papyrus specialists such as Sitatunga. There is a chance for Leopard, Spotted Hyena, and jackals. The birding is excellent.

Among the many species regularly recorded in the park are a range of birds large and small. A representation of what is possible includes Crested Francolin; Emerald-spotted Wood-Dove; Bare-faced Go-away-bird; Red-chested Cuckoo; African Finfoot; White-headed, Lappet-faced and White-backed vultures; Brown Snake-Eagle; African Hawk-Eagle; Speckled Mousebird; Green Woodhoopoe; Common Scimitarbill; African Gray Hornbill; Striped Kingfisher; Broad-billed Roller; Bearded and Nubian woodpeckers; White-crested Helmetshrike; African Black-headed Oriole; African Penduline-Tit; Wattled and Greater Blue-eared starlings; and Yellow-throated Longclaw.



**Lappet-faced Vulture © Roy Morris/Macualay Library at the  
Cornell Lab of Ornithology**

NIGHT: Igongo Country Hotel & Cultural Centre, Mbarara

**March 12, Day 6: Drive to Bwindi Impenetrable National Park.** The next stop on our journey is Bwindi Impenetrable Forest National Park, located in the southwestern corner of the country.

Bwindi Impenetrable National Park is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is home to approximately half of the world population of 1,000 Mountain Gorillas. Beyond its importance as a Gorilla reserve, this vast reserve offers some of the most productive montane forest birding in Africa and supports 23 of Uganda's 24 Albertine Rift endemic bird species. Once part of a much larger forest that included the Virunga Volcanoes in neighboring Rwanda, Bwindi Impenetrable National Park is now an ecological island within a sea of human cultivation, and therefore, of immense conservation importance. Excellent forest birding, not least the prospect of numerous rare and localized Albertine Rift endemics, makes this a true birding mecca.

NIGHT: Mahogany Springs Lodge, Bwindi Impenetrable National Park

**March 13, Day 8: Gorilla Trekking in Bwindi Impenetrable Forest.** There can be little doubt that this may be the most anticipated day on the trip. We will set off to the park headquarters, arriving at 8:00 a.m. for a briefing prior to gorilla trekking. We will be led by park guides through wet forests with a dense understory of Wild Nettles and Giant Celery, often on steep terrain, to a group of Mountain Gorillas. These groups have been habituated by researchers and park staff to daily visits by wildlife enthusiasts. The park guides



vocalize to the gorilla groups as we approach to make them aware of our arrival. These huge apes are amazingly placid and tolerant of our presence. It is usually possible to get to within a few meters of them as they play and feed. It is sensational to stare into the eyes of these gentle giants and watch them in awe as they go about their daily activities. Each encounter is different and has its own rewards; you are undoubtedly going to enjoy the close views of adults feeding, grooming and resting as the youngsters frolic and swing from vines in a delightfully playful display. It will be an unforgettable experience.

**SPECIAL NOTES ABOUT GORILLA VIEWING:** The demand for permits to view the gorillas is enormous. Permits are pricey, currently \$800 USD. It is therefore essential if you wish to accompany a gorilla trek (the only realistic way to see these magnificent animals) during your visit, that when you register for the trip, you clearly state that you want to pay for a gorilla trek. Permits are nonrefundable. We anticipate that not everyone will want to accompany a gorilla trek, so we have kept this cost separate from the trip fee. You will need to be reasonably fit to undertake the gorilla viewing walk, although the pace is kept appropriate to participants' fitness. Normally, the walk involves three to six hours, but occasionally, if gorilla groups are on the distant edges of their territories, it may take up to ten hours. Porters are available to assist participants, helping them with their packs and assisting them in the walk. Quite often the gorillas can be found within an hour. On rare occasions it is possible to miss the gorillas completely. You will have more information available on the group whereabouts during the briefing.



**Female Mountain Gorillas, Bwindi © Steve Hilty**

For those who choose to opt out of the Gorilla trek, we will organize birding in the excellent community forest with local guides. It is also possible to enjoy a village walk around the Buhoma community and enjoy a bit of shopping and a cup of tea or coffee.

**NIGHT:** Mahogany Springs Lodge, Munyanga River, Bwindi



**March 14, Day 9: Bwindi Impenetrable Forest.** We will spend two days exploring the roads and trails in this forest, one of the most bird and mammal rich sites in East Africa. Among some of the primates possible are L'Hoest's Monkey, Black and White colobus, and Red-tailed and Blue monkeys. Some other mammals possible include both the Black-faced and elusive Yellow-backed duikers, plus Carruther's, Boehm's and Alexander's squirrels. Birding, while at times may be slow, will reward the patient observer with an incredible variety of species. Among the many species possible are Eastern Bronze-naped Pigeon, Barred Long-tailed Cuckoo, Black Goshawk, Narina and Bar-tailed trogons, Black and Cinnamon-chested bee-eaters, Blue-throated Roller, Gray-throated Barbet, Willcock's Honeyguide, Elliot's Woodpecker, African Broadbill, Blue-shouldered Robin-Chat; and and Slender-billed and Waller's starlings to name only a few. At higher altitudes, if the weather permits, we will try our luck with Handsome Francolin and the beautiful Purple-breasted Sunbird among others.



**Blue-throated Roller © Hans Nicolai/Macaulay Library at the  
Cornell Lab of Ornithology**

NIGHTS: Mahogany Springs Lodge, Munyanga River, Bwindi

**March 15, Day 10: Bwindi to Queen Elizabeth National Park.** This morning, we will make our way from the Bwindi Forest to Queen Elizabeth National Park, always on the lookout for more wildlife. Queen Elizabeth National Park protects varied habitats ranging from open savannah to rainforest, from dense papyrus swamps and crater lakes to the vastness of Lake Edward. It is little wonder that QENP boasts one of the highest biodiversity ratings of any game reserve in the world. Almost 100 mammal species and a remarkable 600 bird species make this superb safari territory. African Elephant, a profusion of hippos, and Kob are all likely, with good chances also for Lion, Leopard, Spotted Hyaena, and the rare Giant Forest Hog. We will drive through the Ishasha section (if conditions permit), which is famed for the presence of tree climbing Lions. If we are fortunate, we may have a view of these magnificent felines as they bask in the trees. This afternoon after checking into the Mweya Safari Lodge, we may have an evening game drive in

the park to try for some nocturnal birds and mammals. The lodge boasts a marvelous waterfront setting in the shadow of the Rwenzori Mountains.



**African Lion © Dion Hobcroft**

NIGHT: Mweya Safari Lodge, Queen Elizabeth National Park

**March 16, Day 11: Game Drive in the park and boat cruise on the Kazinga Channel.** We will start early today and go for a drive to look for big game—African Elephant, Cape Buffalo, Leopard, Lion, and Topi—and many excellent birds amid great scenery. Special birds include Red-necked Spurfowl, Black-bellied Bustard, African Crake, Lesser Flamingo, Senegal Lapwing, Marabou Stork, Bateleur Eagle, Verreaux's Eagle-Owl, Red-throated Bee-eater, and Sulphur-breasted Bushshrike, to mention a handful.

This afternoon, after lunch at the lodge, we'll enjoy a boat cruise on spectacular Kazinga Channel, that runs through the park connecting Lake George and Lake Edward. Beyond the hippos and crocodiles are more classic wetland birds including such stunners as Black Crake, African Jacana, Water Thick-knee, Saddle-billed Stork, Little Bittern, Great White Pelican, African Skimmer, African Pygmy Kingfisher, and Black-headed Weaver.





**Red-throated Bee-eater © Scott Watson/Macaulay Library at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology**

NIGHT: Mweya Safari Lodge, Queen Elizabeth National Park

**March 17, Day 12: Drive to Kibale National Park.** After a final morning of wildlife watching in QENP, we will drive to Kibale National Park. Kibale's major attraction is the opportunity to observe troops of Chimpanzees. These incredible apes, more closely related to humans than to any other living creature, are tremendous fun to watch as they socialize and vocalize noisily in fruiting trees. A network of shady forest trails provides much to delight botanists and butterfly lovers, while birders are in for a treat with 335 species recorded in the forest. The elusive African Forest Elephant, smaller and hairier than its savannah counterpart, are resident in the park. In the afternoon it will be possible to have a nature walk at Bigodi wetland which is managed by the local community, a successful story of the benefits of ecotourism. It provides a good chance to look for such beautiful birds as Yellow-billed Barbet and Red-headed Bluebill, and monkeys like the Central Africa Red Colobus and Gray-cheeked Mangabey.

NIGHT: Chimpundu Lodge, Kibale National Park

**March 18, Day 13: Chimp tracking at Kibale National Park.** After an early breakfast we will go to the forest for birding and chimp tracking. Tracking the Chimpanzee is a very interesting experience; the way they feed, climb trees, respond to humans, and care for their young ones is just phenomenal. This is a daily drama of life in a rainforest and a rare chance to look back into a window of our evolutionary history. This park is notable for its primate population, with the Chimpanzees being the most famous. Birding in Uganda is astonishingly rich and Kibale is no exception. If we are very fortunate, we may be able to track down the elusive Green-breasted Pitta. We have chances of finding a variety of birds, with some of the notables including Black-billed Turaco, African Emerald Cuckoo, Crowned Eagle, Narina Trogon, White-headed Wood-Hoopoe, Black Bee-eater, Petit's Cuckoo-shrike, and Pink-footed Puffback.





**Chimpanzee, Kibale National Park © Giles Laurent**

NIGHT: Chimpundu Lodge, Kibale National Park

**March 19, Day 14: Kibale National Park to Masindi.** After some early morning birding and mammal watching, we will travel north to Masindi. The roads are all currently undergoing extensive construction with significant stretches improved and almost the entire way on a sealed road surface. We will make several birding stops along the way in both forested and farm bush environments, and are guaranteed some good bird sightings on this travel day.

NIGHT: Masindi Hotel, Masindi

**March 20, Day 15: Budongo Forest.** The Budongo Forest is one of the most celebrated forest birding sites in all of Africa. An extension of the inaccessible forests of the Congo that just cross into Uganda, it is a unique location for a selection of rare forest birds. We will make a day of experiencing the best this forest has to offer, with a number of beautiful and spectacular birds likely in store. A sampling of the many possibilities today includes Nahan's Francolin, African Dwarf Kingfisher, Chocolate-backed Kingfisher, White-thighed Hornbill, Golden-crowned Woodpecker, Chestnut-capped Flycatcher, Yellow-breasted Forest Robin, and Red-tailed Ant-Thrush. In the afternoon we will return to our comfortable hotel in Masindi.

NIGHT: Masindi Hotel, Masindi

**March 21, Day 16: Drive to Murchison Falls National Park.** We will drive through the Budongo Forest and enter a new faunal zone as we enter the tropical savanna woodlands of Murchison Falls National Park. Depending on rainfall, we will begin by exploring the Butiaba Escarpment, an area where we may find some special birds like Black-billed Barbet, Mocking Cliff-Chat, and Foxy Cisticola. We will later cross the Victoria Nile River and check-in at Paraa Safari Lodge. Murchison Falls Conservation Area (MFNP) is comprised of Bugungu and Karuma Wildlife Reserves. It derives its name from the Murchison Falls where

the mighty Victoria Nile River explodes through a narrow gorge and flows down to become a placid river whose banks are thronged with Hippos, Nile Crocodiles, Defassa Waterbuck, and Cape Buffalo. The vegetation is characterized by savannah, riparian forest, and woodland. Wildlife includes Lion, Leopard, African Elephant, Giraffe, Cape Buffalo, Coke's Hartebeest, Oribi, Kob, and Patas Monkey.

NIGHT: Paraa Safari Lodge, Murchison Falls National Park

**March 22, Day 17: Game Drive in Murchison Falls National Park.** After an early breakfast, we will go for a full morning game drive in the delta area, followed by lunch and a siesta. Birds to be on the lookout for include Beaudouin's Snake-Eagle, Dark Chanting Goshawk, Senegal Thick-knee, White-crested Turaco, Northern Carmine Bee-eater, Swallow-tailed Bee-eater, Abyssinian Ground Hornbill, Pennant-winged Nightjar, Yellow-billed Oxpecker and Silverbird. Following an afternoon break, we will enjoy a late-day boat cruise, bringing us close to the base of these magnificent falls. The bizarre Palm-nut Vulture, African Fish-Eagle, and Northern Red bishop, plus the peculiar Piapiac, are among the expected avian delights.



Northern Carmine Bee-eater ©  
Paul Maury/Macaulay Library at the  
Cornell Lab of Ornithology

NIGHT: Paraa Safari Lodge, Murchison Falls National Park

**March 23, Day 18: Murchison Falls National Park.** After breakfast, we will have another boat trip, this time down the Nile River to its delta at Lake Albert. This will provide another chance to enjoy viewing the

big game in the largest conservation area in Uganda. It is also excellent as a backup location to see the Shoebill in case we missed it earlier. In between mammal sightings, there are still a huge variety of birds to keep searching for, including at least four species of sunbird, eight species of cisticola and a confusing array of starlings, weavers, seedeaters, and Giant Kingfisher. After a relaxed lunch at the lodge, followed by a break, we will enjoy a drive to the top of Murchison Falls to witness the power of one of the world's most turbulent stretches of water.

NIGHT: Paraa Safari Lodge, Murchison Falls National Park

**March 24–25, Days 19–20: Return to Entebbe; departure for home.** Today we will make the return drive to Entebbe. The drive is lengthy (approximately four hours), but will be broken up by several stops to stretch our legs.

We will check into the Boma Hotel where a day room has been reserved in your name. This evening, we will convene for a final social hour and dinner, after which we will have time to finish packing before transferring to the airport. Flights to the United States depart after 8:00 p.m. Flight departing tonight will arrive in the USA on March 25.

DAYROOM (March 24): Protea Hotel Entebbe

**TRIP SIZE:** This trip will be limited to 20 participants.

**TRIP HOSTS AND TRIP LEADERS:** Hosting this trip will be **Ian Owens** and **Mary Guthrie** from the Cornell Lab. Leading this trip will be **Barry Lyon** from Victor Emanuel Nature Tours and **Herbert Byaruhanga** and local guides from Bird Uganda Safaris.



**Dr. Ian Owens** is the Louis Agassiz Fuertes Executive Director of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Professor of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at Cornell University. A birder since his teens, he has traveled around the world in pursuit of birds and wild places, and has conducted research across Europe, Australasia, Asia, and the South West Pacific islands. Before joining the Lab, Ian held directorships at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History in Washington, DC, and the Natural History Museum in London, and was a professor at Imperial College London and University of Queensland. He has published more than 100 academic papers on birds and a book on *Evolutionary Ecology in Birds: Life Histories, Mating Systems and*

*Extinction Risk*. His main research interests are in large-scale patterns in biodiversity and evolution in wild populations. Ian has edited a number of international journals, sits on the board of a series of conservation organizations, and received the Zoological Medal from the Zoological Society of London for contributions to his field.





**Mary Guthrie** is the Director of Major Gifts and Corporate Marketing Partnerships at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. With a lifelong interest in birds and nature, Mary has followed the Cornell Lab since her time as a Cornell undergraduate. She had a number of different roles at the Cornell Lab. Her efforts include licensing content for push-button books, calendars, toys, games, and apps that help people connect with birds. She has grown partnerships between the Cornell Lab and companies that share our goals. Examples include an app in Subaru cars that helps people find birds, seed and feeder companies that help us train teachers how to use birds in their classrooms, and binocular companies that support our Young Birders Program. Before joining the Lab, Mary worked at Cornell's Johnson Graduate School of Management, and prior to coming to Cornell she worked in magazine

publishing and was a reporter for a number of newspapers including the *Los Angeles Times*. She has an M.A. in Print Journalism from the University of Southern California and a B.A. in Government from Cornell University. Mary lives with her two teenagers, Maggie and Charlie, in Trumansburg, New York.



**Barry Lyon's** passion for the outdoors and birding has its roots in his childhood in southern California. During his teenage years, he attended several VENT/ABA youth birding camps, which ultimately led to his future involvement with Victor Emanuel Nature Tours. He holds a B.A. from the University of Arizona at Tucson where he studied history and political science, with an emphasis on environment and development politics. Barry joined the VENT team as a tour leader in 1995 and embarked on a travel-based career that has taken him to an array of worldwide destinations. He has lived in Austin, Texas since 2004 when he joined our office staff as an administrative assistant. In 2014 he was named Chief Operating Officer (COO), reflecting his increased experience and responsibilities. In 2023 Barry ascended to the role of Chief Executive

Officer (CEO). Although Barry still leads two or three trips a year, these days his work is geared almost entirely toward business, customer relations, and the management of the company. Barry's background and his knowledge of natural history have provided him with a strong interest in conservation. He is a former board member and past president of Travis Audubon Society, which emphasizes conservation through birding and outdoor education for children. Barry resides in South Austin with his wife, Brooke Smith.



**Herbert Byaruhanga's** passion for birding and nature was cultivated in the picturesque Rutoto Village, where as a child, he observed and fed eagles near his home. His love for wildlife led him to pursue professional training, and he quickly excelled as the top candidate in an intensive Nature Guide training program at Lake Mburo National Park. Recognizing his exceptional potential, Birdlife International sponsored Herbert to further his expertise in South Africa, where he became a certified trainer of bird guides for Uganda and the broader East African region. Herbert holds a Bachelor's Degree in Tourism Management from Makerere University, alongside numerous certificates and diplomas in tourism, guiding, and leadership. Herbert's contributions to Uganda's birding community are unparalleled. He is the visionary founder of the **Uganda**

**Bird Guides Club, Uganda Safari Guides Association, and the Uganda Women Birders Club.** In December 2023, he successfully organized the **inaugural International Conference for Women Birders**

in Kampala and is actively preparing for the second edition in Costa Rica, scheduled for September 2025. Known affectionately as **“The Father of Birding in Uganda,”** Herbert has trained over 90% of the country’s bird guides, gaining him the nickname **“Mr. Product Knowledge.”** In 2001, Herbert established **Bird Uganda Safaris**, a premier birding and wildlife safari company. His extensive experience has made him a sought-after speaker at birding and conservation conferences worldwide, particularly at prominent birding festivals in the United States, where he is a regular guest speaker. Herbert’s expertise spans the East African region, where he continues to lead birding tours across Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, and Rwanda, now supported by his sons, Mark Bankunda and Davis Rukundo, who are celebrated among Uganda’s top birding guides.

**MEDICAL EVACUATION INSURANCE REQUIREMENT:** This tour visits remote locations where immediate access to primary medical care may **NOT** be available. **For this reason, travel insurance which covers you for emergency evacuation is required for participation on this tour.** This coverage is included in the **Ripcord Rescue Travel Insurance™** program. Through Ripcord, “emergency evacuation” can be purchased as a stand-alone benefit or as part of a comprehensive travel insurance policy. If you choose not to purchase insurance through Ripcord, you are required to obtain it through another provider.

**FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:** The fee for this tour is **\$19,995** per person based on double occupancy from Entebbe, Uganda. This fee includes all meals beginning with dinner on Day 2 ending with dinner on Day 19, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation, park entrance fees, boat cruise, gratuities, and guide services provided by the tour leader and local guides. Tour fees do not include airfare from your home to Entebbe and return, optional gorilla trekking permit, visa fees, alcoholic beverages, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration a small party supplement may be charged.

The single supplement for this tour is **\$1,500**. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodations or if you prefer to share but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you.

**NOTE: The cost of the optional gorilla trekking permit is \$800 (subject to change and nonrefundable once purchased) and must be purchased on your behalf by VENT at the time of booking. It is important to note that the gorilla permits are subject to availability and therefore it is imperative that you book early and inform the VENT office that you require a permit.**

**REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT:** To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The initial deposit for this tour is **\$2,000** per person. A second deposit of **\$5,000** is due 210 days prior to departure (August 9, 2025). If you prefer to pay your deposits using a credit card, the deposits must be made with MasterCard or Visa at the time of registration. If you would like to pay your initial deposit by check, money order, or bank transfer, your tour space will be held for 10 days to allow time for the VENT office to receive your deposit and completed registration form. The VENT registration form (available from the VENT office or by download at <https://ventbird.com>) should be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office.

**PAYMENTS:** All tour payments may be made by credit card (MasterCard or Visa), check, money order, or bank transfer (contact the VENT office for bank transfer information). These include initial deposits, second deposits, interim payments, final balances, special arrangements, etc. Full payment of the tour fee is due 150 days prior to the tour departure date (October 8, 2025).

**EXCHANGE RATE SURCHARGES:** In the erratic global financial markets of today, it is difficult to predict foreign currency exchange rates over the long term or at the time of operation of a tour or cruise departure. Tour prices are based upon the rate of exchange at the time of itinerary publication. If exchange rates change drastically, it may be necessary to implement a surcharge. If a surcharge is necessary, every effort

will be made to minimize the amount. In many cases, these additional foreign exchange rate surcharges are passed to VENT by its vendors and suppliers.

**FUEL & FUEL SURCHARGES:** In the uncertain, often volatile oil market of late, it is difficult if not impossible to predict fuel costs over the long term, and more specifically, at the time of operation of this departure. Our prices are based upon the prevailing fuel rates at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, if the fuel rates increase significantly, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

**CANCELLATION & REFUNDS:**

**Cancellation by Participant:**

Refunds, if any, for any cancellation by a participant are made according to the following schedule: If participant cancels 210 days or more before the tour departure date, a cancellation fee of **\$500** per person will be charged unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months from the date of participant tour cancellation, in which case the cancellation fee will be **\$100** per person. If cancellation is made between 209 and 151 days before departure date, the deposit is not refundable, but any payments covering the balance of the tour fee will be refunded. If cancellation is made fewer than 150 days before departure date, no refund is available. For participants’ protection, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance that covers trip cancellation/interruption.

<u>If participant cancels:</u>	<u>Participant’s refund will be:</u>
210 days or more before departure date	Your deposit(s) minus \$500*
209 to 151 days before departure date	No refund of the deposits, but any payments on the balance will be refunded
150 days or less before departure date	No refund available

**Cancellation by VENT:**

If VENT cancels a tour prior to departure without cause or good reason, VENT will provide the participant a full refund, which will constitute full settlement to the participant.

If VENT cancels or delays a tour or any portion of a tour as a result of any Force Majeure event, VENT will use its reasonable best efforts to refund any payments on the balance of the tour fee to participant; provided that, VENT will have no obligation to provide a participant with a refund and will not be liable or responsible to a participant, nor be deemed to have defaulted under or breached any applicable agreement, for any failure or delay in fulfilling or performing any term of such agreement. A “Force Majeure” event means any act beyond VENT’s control, including, without limitation, the following: (a) acts of God; (b) flood, fire, earthquake, hurricane, epidemic, pandemic or explosion; (c) war, invasion, hostilities (whether war is declared or not), terrorist threats or acts, riot or other civil unrest; (d) government order, law or actions; (e) embargoes or blockades; (f) national or regional emergency; (g) strikes, labor stoppages, labor slowdowns or other industrial disturbances; (h) shortage of adequate power or transportation facilities; and (i) any other similar events or circumstances beyond the control of VENT.

This VENT Cancellation & Refunds policy does not apply to air tickets purchased through VENT or to any special arrangements, such as additional hotel nights, that fall outside of the services described in the tour itinerary.

**Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is not a participant in the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a**



**bond issued by Travelers in the amount of \$50,000. CST #2014998-50.**

**TRAVEL INSURANCE:** To safeguard against losses due to illness, accident, or other unforeseen circumstances, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance as soon as possible after making a deposit. VENT has partnered with Redpoint Travel Protection as our preferred travel insurance provider. Through Redpoint, we recommend their **Ripcord** plan. Designed for all types of travelers, Ripcord is among the most comprehensive travel protection programs available.

Critical benefits of Ripcord include a completely integrated program with a single contact for emergency services, travel assistance, and insurance claims; **medical evacuation from your point of injury or illness to your hospital of choice**; comprehensive travel insurance for trip cancellation/interruption, medical expense coverage, death of pet, and much more. Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as evacuation coverage in case of a natural disaster or political or security reasons, waiver for pre-existing medical conditions exclusion, and a “Cancel for Any Reason” benefit. Ripcord is available to U.S. and non-U.S. residents.\*

For a price quote, or to purchase travel insurance, please visit: [ripcordtravelprotection.com/ventbird](http://ripcordtravelprotection.com/ventbird); or click the **Ripcord** logo on our website (click Help and Trip Insurance); or call +1-415-481-0600. Pricing is based on age, trip cost, trip length, and level of coverage.

\*To be eligible for the pre-existing medical condition exclusion waiver and the optional Cancel for Any Reason (CFAR) upgrade, you must purchase your policy within 15 days of making your tour deposit. The CFAR benefit provides reimbursement for 75% of covered costs, and increases the policy premium by approximately 50%. Policies may be purchased either for the full value of the tour fee at the time of deposit or in segments as individual tour payments are made (deposit, mid-payment, final balance, additional arrangements, etc.). The “pay as you go” approach reduces up-front expense and ensures that the amount paid toward your full policy premium is in proportion to the amount paid toward the full tour fee. If you choose to “pay as you go,” you must cover each deposit or payment within 15 days in order to maintain the CFAR benefit. The primary medical expense benefit is available to U.S. residents only. For this reason, non-U.S. residents will pay an adjusted premium when purchasing a comprehensive policy, which includes all of the other benefits available to U.S. residents. Please refer to the policy for a full description of coverage.

#### **Coronavirus (COVID-19):**

In line with the decision made by the federal government (including the CDC), Redpoint considers COVID-19 illness as any other seasonal respiratory illness. Providing only a positive Covid-19 test result will likely not be considered a covered event per the terms and conditions of the company's policy. Redpoint maintains a Coronavirus FAQ page on its website that addresses questions and concerns travelers may have regarding COVID-19 and Redpoint's policy. We strongly recommend that you visit the page for an overview of relevant topics.

Please visit the **Coronavirus FAQ** page at the following link:

[https://redpointtravelprotection.com/covid\\_19\\_faq/](https://redpointtravelprotection.com/covid_19_faq/)

**AIR INFORMATION:** Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements from your home and return. Per person fees apply for each set of travel arrangements: \$50 domestic; \$75 international.\* Many of our travelers choose to make their own air travel arrangements, but we emphasize the benefits to using our services. If you book your air arrangements yourself, Victor Emanuel Travel is unable to provide support in managing any flight delays and/or cancellations that could occur before and during a tour. When you purchase air tickets through

Victor Emanuel Travel, our staff has ready access to your air ticket record and can provide assistance as problems arise. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements. **Please be sure to check with the VENT office prior to purchasing your air ticket to confirm that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. VENT cannot be held responsible for any air ticket penalties.**

\*An air ticket will be purchased by Victor Emanuel Travel on behalf of the traveler with the traveler's consent. A purchase is considered final upon receipt of payment. If a ticket is subsequently reissued at the behest of the traveler (i.e. voluntary change of plans), the same fee rates apply for the reissue process, in addition to any fees that may be charged by the airline.

**BAGGAGE:** On this trip we will be travelling in high clearance Land Cruisers with large windows that can be opened. Space in the vehicle is good, but on travel days the luggage will take up much of the back seat area. We try to ensure everyone has a seat with a window to make the most of all the wildlife viewing. To ensure your comfort and that of your companions, **please limit your luggage to one soft-sided wheeled bag and one carry-on bag.** As your trip to Uganda is a lengthy one, please pack as efficiently as you can, and refrain from bringing excessive amounts of luggage. Please use the VENT luggage tag that will be sent to you, as it helps immensely in identifying our group's baggage.

The airlines now strictly enforce baggage regulations. Excess baggage charges, which can be substantial, are the personal responsibility of each participant. As a precaution against lost luggage, we suggest that you pack a change of clothes, toiletries, medications, important travel documents, optics, and any other essential items in your carry-on bag.

Due to ever-changing circumstances in the government's attempts to improve airport security we recommend that you check the websites of your airline and the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) for the most updated information regarding checked baggage and carry-on items: <http://www.tsa.gov/>.

**CLOTHING:** The physical environment of this trip ranges from warm, humid lowlands to chilly highland forest. The days will be cool to warm with rain unlikely, yet certainly possible. Light field clothing and casual attire are suitable for this trip. Neutral colors and light pastels are best for field wear (bright colors and patterns, including white, can spook wildlife). Please note Tsetse flies are attracted to bright blue so this is not recommended in the narrow zones where they are a nuisance. The following items are recommended:

- **Pants:** Two or three pairs of pants are essential. Many people prefer lightweight pants made of cotton or other material, but denim, though not as comfortable, is certainly acceptable. We do not recommend shorts.
- **Field Clothing:** Outdoor stores such as Bass Pro-Shop and REI carry field clothing that many birders find appealing. Pants and long-sleeved shirts made of lightweight, yet durable materials with multiple pockets and ventilated seams are popular. These provide useful protection from the sun and occasional biting insects. This type of clothing is easily self-washed and dries quickly.
- **Shirts:** A couple long-sleeved t-shirts in addition to other comfortable styles suitable for both warm weather and cool conditions alike. We do not recommend short-sleeved shirts as they offer no protection from biting insects or the sun.
- **Hat:** A hat, particularly of a wide-brimmed style, for protection from the sun is essential. Please bring a baseball-style cap at the very least.
- **Outerwear:** Warm weather is anticipated on this trip, but a sweater or light coat or jacket will come in handy for the mornings and evenings, especially in the highlands. A thermal top for layering is often very useful. In the event of rain, you'll want to have a water repellent jacket as well.
- **Sleepwear:** The hotels are not heated, so bring something warm to sleep in, such as flannel pajamas or sweatpants.

- **Swimsuit:** A few of the hotels have swimming pools.

**FOOTWEAR:** We recommend a good-quality light hiking boot that provides solid ankle support and firm traction. We will spend a fair amount of time walking in forest areas (on mostly level or slightly rising terrain), and you will be best served with this type of footwear. A good trail shoe will also suffice, but these lack the ankle support of a good boot, which could be a factor for some if we need to walk a long distance to reach the gorillas in the Bwindi Forest. A lighter shoe, like an athletic shoe, will come in handy when relaxing around the lodges.

**LAUNDRY:** Laundry services are available everywhere that we spend more than one night, so you need only a few changes of clothing.

**CLIMATE & WEATHER:** Uganda is an equatorial country with considerable geographic variation, ranging from warm tropical lowlands to cool volcanic highlands. The December–March period tends to be the warmest time of the year, but temperatures vary depending on location. In the lowland parks, such as Lake Mburo, Murchison Falls, and Queen Elizabeth National Park, daytime highs can reach the 80s (°F), while nighttime lows can drop to the 40s. The highlands, such as at Bwindi, experience cooler conditions, with temperatures ranging from the 40s to 60s. March is a shoulder month with regard to rainfall. A long rainy season prevails from late March through May. In some years, March is entirely dry, while in others late March sees heavy rainfall. Smaller, more isolated storms unrelated to the rainy season can materialize at any time. Overall, we should anticipate a mostly dry and warm trip, but with the understanding that we could see considerable rain if the rainy season starts early.

## **CONDITIONS:**

**The program:** This trip to Uganda will be a relaxed event with birdwatching and wildlife viewing our primary focus. In covering a broad swath of the southern part of the country, our itinerary promises exposure to many locations of global ecological importance including national parks and forest reserves, famous landmarks, and an array of other significant natural areas. Our activities will include traditional safari excursions, by vehicle and boat, and birdwatching field trips, many of these on foot. Our daily activities will be interspersed with opportunities to learn about conservation initiatives in Uganda and the challenges the country faces in protecting its equatorial forests and attendant wildlife. We will travel with Herbert Byaruhanga, the foremost birdwatching and wildlife guide in the country, and his team of well-trained guides. Herbert will provide interpretation about his native Uganda through the duration of our trip. Many days of the trip will include evening social hours. These events will allow for time together in a casual setting in the environments of our hotels and lodges. On at least two occasions, we will attend presentations by the Lab staff that demonstrate the connection of its work and conservation efforts underway in East Africa.

**Physical demands:** This trip does not require a high level of fitness, but participants should be in good general health, as much of our birding will be done on foot and may require walking for an hour or more at a time. On some occasions, we may be walking on narrow and/or steep forest trails (always optional) to find a few special birds; however, our pace will be slow as we bird in the forests.

Overall, physical demands will be light. At no time will you be asked to participate in activities that exceed your physical capability. Should you have any physical limitations, please notify us in advance of departure.

The optional Gorilla trek at Bwindi Impenetrable Forest (see Day 8) can involve several hours of potentially strenuous walking on steep slopes, often off-trail. You will need to be reasonably fit to undertake the Gorilla



viewing walk, although the pace is kept appropriate to participants' fitness. Normally, the walk involves three to six hours, but occasionally, if Gorilla groups are on the distant edges of their territories, it may take up to ten hours. Porters are available to assist participants, helping them with their packs and assisting them in the walk. Quite often the Gorillas can be found within an hour. On rare occasions it is possible to miss them completely. You will have more information available on the group whereabouts during the pre-excursion briefing.

**Accommodations:** Most of the lodges featured on this trip combine luxury with the allure of the wilderness, tailored for nature enthusiasts while offering a refined touch in their designs. The rooms are generously spacious, thoughtfully furnished, and include comfortable beds, ensuring guests enjoy a restful stay. The dining experiences are diverse, with a blend of international flavors and local cuisine to cater to all palates.

Paraa and Mweya Safari Lodges capture the essence of both classic safari allure and contemporary luxury. Their architecture pays homage to Africa's golden safari era, while modern touches provide utmost comfort. At Paraa, guests can relax by the pool with a stunning view of the mighty River Nile, while at Mweya, the picturesque Kazinga Channel serves as the backdrop for an unforgettable experience.

Igongo Country Hotel, nestled in the cultural heart of southwestern Uganda, blends modern comfort with the rich heritage of the region. The hotel emphasizes sustainability with a farm-to-table dining approach, offering fresh, locally sourced produce. Guests can also explore the Cultural Museum, which provides fascinating insights into the history and traditions of the Banyankole people.

Mahogany Springs Lodge, ideally located for an unforgettable Gorilla trekking experience, offers an intimate and luxurious sanctuary for nature lovers and adventurers alike. The spacious rooms are elegantly designed with private terraces that allow guests to enjoy the surrounding beauty in peace and comfort.

**Food & drink:** Guests staying at our high-quality accommodations can enjoy a diverse range of culinary delights prepared with exceptional quality and safety in mind. The menus feature a mix of international cuisines, including Italian, French, Asian, and Mediterranean dishes, alongside traditional Ugandan specialties like Luwombo, Matoke, and grilled Tilapia. Many lodges adopt a farm-to-table approach, using fresh, locally sourced ingredients for an authentic and sustainable dining experience.

Drink options include premium wines, spirits, signature cocktails, fresh juices, smoothies, and Uganda's renowned specialty teas. Bottled mineral water is provided, ensuring safe hydration for all guests.

Lodges uphold high health and safety standards, with strict food hygiene practices and purified water readily available. Staff receive regular training, and communal areas are kept impeccably clean. Guests can also access travel health advice upon request. These lodges seamlessly blend luxury, cultural authenticity, and guest well-being.

**Means of travel:** Ground travel will be in extended Land Cruiser safari vehicles, designed for comfort and space. Each vehicle, though capable of seating seven, will carry only five guests to ensure ample room for everyone. There will be several lengthy drives and many of the days will require early starts. While some roads in Uganda are remarkably good, many areas still require work (such as various sections of road between Masindi to Kibale). We will also be driving on dirt tracks such as in Queen Elizabeth National Park and Lake Mburo National Park, and at times some of those roads will be bumpy.

Small, exclusive boats will also be used for water-based activities, accommodating up to 15 passengers each. Depending on the group size and schedule, two boats may be deployed simultaneously or at separate times. These methods prioritize comfort, exclusivity, and a seamless safari experience for all

guests.

**Daily schedule:** Daily activities are meticulously planned to provide a seamless and enriching experience.

Game drives and boat excursions: Morning and afternoon activities include game drives in national parks and tranquil boat rides on the River Nile and Kazinga Channel.

Gorilla trekking: Begins with an early breakfast before an 8:00 a.m. briefing for gorilla trekking in Bwindi's mountain forests. As there are no fixed trails, each participant is recommended to hire a porter (cost including gratuity covered by VENT) to assist with navigating the forest and carrying essentials, including a backpack with 4 liters of water, a packed lunch, and a personal first-aid kit. Generous tips are welcomed. The gorilla experience may last from a few hours to over six hours, with early returnees able to relax at the lodge.

Chimpanzee tracking and nature walks: At Kibale Forest, morning chimpanzee tracking is followed by an optional nature walk around Bigodi community trails or leisure time at the lodge.

Game drives at Mweya Safari Lodge: Guests may choose between an early 6:00 a.m. coffee or breakfast at 6:30 a.m. before embarking on a game drive, returning mid-morning for a meal. Afternoon boat cruises begin at 2:00 p.m. and last 2–3 hours.

Birding from Protea Hotel: Breakfast is served at 6:00 a.m. to facilitate travel to Mabamba Swamp for the Shoebill experience via community motorized dugout canoes. Lunch is arranged at the hotel or a local restaurant, followed by birding at the Botanical Gardens at 3:00 p.m.

**EQUIPMENT:** One of the most important aspects of having an enjoyable travel experience is being prepared with proper equipment. The following items will come in handy during your trip to Uganda:

**Daypack** – Good for carrying extra clothing, field guides, supplies, and optical equipment, etc.

**Notebooks and pens**

**Travel alarm clock** – Battery operated is best (if not using this feature on your mobile phone).

**Polarized sunglasses with good UV protection**

**Sunscreen, lip balm, skin lotions**

**Personal toiletries**

**Cameras, lenses, memory cards, and extra batteries**

**Collapsible walking stick** – A highly recommended item for those who have trouble walking

**Umbrella** – A small, collapsible umbrella can be indispensable should we be out in heavy mist or rain.

**Water bottle**

**Tissue packs and moist towelettes**

**Small flashlight or headlamp**

**Small folding stool** – Many people find this item extremely useful when patiently waiting for shy forest birds.

**Personal snacks** – Bringing a supply of your favorite snack items is always a good idea, especially if you have dietary restrictions.

## **BINOCULARS & SPOTTING SCOPES:**

**Binoculars** – We strongly recommend good binoculars of 8x32, 8x42, or 10x42 magnification. We recommend that you NOT bring mini-binoculars of any kind. Some people like “minis” because they are small and lightweight, but they have an extremely small field of view and very poor light-gathering power.

**Spotting Scopes** – Your tour leaders will have scopes available for group use throughout the trip, but if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so.

**Cameras** – You should bring all the camera equipment and spare batteries that you will need as they will be difficult to obtain once we leave Entebbe.

## **TRAVEL DOCUMENTS:**

**Passports:** A passport valid for at least six months beyond your trip return date is required for United States Citizens to enter Uganda. Non-U.S. citizens should check with their consulate/embassy for instructions. Please check the expiration date on your passport. **If it is not valid for six months beyond your trip return date, you will need to get it renewed.** You will also want to make sure that you have at least two blank pages in your passport for stamps.

If you need a passport, you should get it well in advance of your trip departure date. For additional fees, a passport can be issued on an expedited basis. In the United States this can be done at the nearest passport office, most post offices, or the county clerk's office. You may also visit <https://state.gov/travelers/> for information on how to get or renew a passport.

As a safety measure, photocopy the first two pages of your passport and keep the photocopies in a safe place, so if your passport is lost you will have proof of identification. Your passport should be signed and easily available at all times. You will need it for check-in at the airport on your first day of departure, so **do not pack it in your checked luggage.**

It is very important to have your passport and money with you at all times. Suggestions for doing so are a money belt or a pouch with a shoulder strap to be worn on your side or around your neck. It is also wise to carry a copy of your passport information pages in a separate piece of luggage or photographed on your mobile phone.

**Visas** – U.S. citizens intending to travel to Uganda for tourism are required to apply and obtain a visa online in advance of travel. **All visa (E-Visa) applications must be completed via the Government of Uganda's website: [visas.immigration.go.ug](https://visas.immigration.go.ug).** You must apply for your visa at least two weeks prior to travel. The cost at the time of publication is \$50 USD. Please be mindful not to apply too early for your visa as they expire 90 days from the date your visa is approved.

**Yellow Fever** – All travelers to Uganda must have a valid Yellow Fever immunization card. A certificate for Yellow Fever vaccination is required in order to obtain your visa. Please note you may be asked to show your YFV certificate upon arrival at the airport.

**CURRENCY & MONEY MATTERS:** Your trip fee includes all necessary expenses; however, you may want to bring some cash to cover personal expenses not included in the program, such as gifts, laundry, gratuities, meals on your own, and personal items. It is best to carry small denominations as hotels and lodges may be unable to provide change for large bills. If you choose to obtain local currency, it is best to do so before departing the USA or at the airport upon arrival in Uganda. ATMs are available in all towns if you need additional cash. U.S. currency notes need to be in mint condition and printed after 2015, otherwise they are difficult to exchange. Please note that bills exchanged at \$20 and below receive a less favorable exchange rate.



MasterCard and Visa are widely accepted, while American Express has limited acceptance. Please check with your bank and credit card issuer for more information regarding banking and the use of ATM and credit cards overseas.

The official currency of Uganda is the Uganda Shilling (USH). You can check the latest currency conversion rate by visiting “XE-The World’s Favorite Currency Site” at: <http://www.xe.com/>.

**ELECTRICITY:** Uganda operates on a 240V supply voltage and 50Hz. Power outlets are of type G, with openings for three rectangular pins arranged in triangular formation. In addition to the type G adapter, you will likely need a voltage converter. The 240V supply in Uganda is much higher than in the United States. Without a converter, you may risk serious damage to your devices. Please check the requirements for your devices and come prepared with the appropriate equipment.

**INTERNET & TELEPHONE:** Wireless internet access is available at most of the hotels we stay in. Please note that the WiFi is often slow and generally available only in the lobby at most accommodation locations. Mobile phone coverage is very good and you will be able to text from most locations.

It is advisable to purchase a local simcard with a minimum of 10GB. MTN is the major service provider that covers over 85% of the country.

**LANGUAGE:** English and Swahili are the “official” first and second national languages.

**TIME:** Uganda is on Eastern Africa Time (EAT) and is eight hours ahead of Eastern Daylight Time (EDT).

**HEALTH:** VENT follows Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations for standard travel precautions, which includes vaccination against a variety of preventable diseases. Among these so-called Routine Vaccinations are measles/mumps/rubella (MMR) vaccine, diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus (DPT) vaccine, poliovirus vaccine (boosters for adult travelers), and Varicella (Chickenpox). You should also be up-to-date with Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B vaccinations.

If you are taking personal medication, prescription or over-the-counter, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the tour safely. Please consult your physician as necessary. Remember to pack all medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication.

**COVID-19:** We continually emphasize that our number one priority is the health and safety of our customers and employees. Although we do not maintain COVID-era prevention protocols, we strongly recommend best practices for protecting yourself and your fellow travelers against COVID-19 illness. These measures include receiving the primary series vaccinations for those eligible, staying “Up to Date” with COVID-19 booster shots, wearing high filtration N-95 or KN-95 masks when in airports and on airplanes, and avoiding risky social settings in the lead-up to your tour.

**Malaria:** Malaria is present in all regions of Uganda, including the chloroquine-resistant variety. The CDC recommends that travelers going to Uganda take prescription medicine to prevent malaria. Depending on the medicine you take, you will need to start taking this medicine multiple days before your trip, as well as during and after your trip. **Please talk with your doctor about which malaria medication you should take.**

**Yellow Fever:** A current certificate for Yellow Fever vaccination is required for entry into Uganda.

**Meningitis:** Meningococcal vaccination is recommended by the CDC. Five meningococcal vaccines (3 quadrivalent, 2 monovalent) are licensed and available in the United States. Travelers should receive vaccines 7–10 days before travel to enable time for protective antibody levels to develop.

**Typhoid:** A disease of fecal contamination of food and water, Typhoid is endemic to Uganda. Although the risk is low, the CDC recommends vaccination.

**Food & Water:** Food standards are high in Uganda and few people experience problems. The hotels and lodges on our travel route conform to proper sanitary and food storage standards. Your trip leaders will always let you know whether certain food items should be avoided. We recommend drinking only bottled water (available everywhere) or filtered water provided by the hotels and lodges.

**Sun Exposure:** The sun's ultraviolet rays are dangerous under prolonged exposure (sometimes only a matter of minutes), especially in tropical regions. Anytime you are outdoors you will want to protect your skin, including your lips, eyes, nose, and ears. A severe sunburn is potentially very painful and will affect your level of enjoyment. Always protect yourself when outdoors and be sure to bring an ample supply of high SPF sunscreen and lip balm. We strongly recommend the use of ultra-violet blocking, polarized sunglasses.

**Biting Insects:** Biting insects are remarkably few in Uganda at this season; nevertheless, mosquitoes, Tsetse flies and other small, biting insects may be present. Insect bites can be avoided by following these procedures:

- Wearing long-sleeved shirts and pants at all times
- When in areas of grass or low brush, tuck your pants into your socks to avoid leaving areas of skin unprotected

**Insect Repellents** – There are insect repellents for the skin and an insect repellent used to treat clothing that should not be applied to the skin.

We suggest a stick-type insect repellent for your face and hands. Repellents for the skin are commonly available in three forms:

- DEET (N,N-diethyl-meta-toluamide): A chemical compound that is marketed under various brand names (OFF!®, Cutter™, Ultrathon™, etc.) and offered in a variety of formulations including sprays, lotions, time-release preparations, and disposable wipes. The formulations will state a percentage of the active ingredient DEET on the packaging. DEET may be applied to exposed skin directly and/or sprayed on clothing. Please be careful when applying DEET as it can damage plastics and lens coatings.
- Picaridin: A synthetic formulation that is derived from piperine, a substance found in plants that produce black pepper.
- Herbal insect repellents: Various mixtures of organic ingredients such as oils from eucalyptus, citronella, cedar, and other herbs. The herbal repellents are more difficult to categorize because of the difference in ingredients from one brand to another. There is considerable variation in their effectiveness.

An insect repellent for clothing is marketed in one approved formulation:

- Permanone® (Permethrin) is an odorless spray-on repellent that may be used for **pre-treatment** of clothing, gear, and tents. It should not be used directly on the skin or sprayed on clothing while it is being worn. The pre-treatment process requires a number of hours to complete and must be done outdoors, so is best completed in advance of travel. Do-it-yourself pre-treatment has to be

repeated more often than commercial treatment using Insect Shield® technology. It is available at various outdoor stores and can easily be found online.

- Insect Shield® apparel: Clothing pre-treated with Permethrin is made by a variety of manufacturers. It is available for purchase from some sporting goods suppliers. The clothing is advertised as retaining its repellency for up to 70 washings.

At the very least, you please consider bringing a pump-style container of repellent for your clothing.

The US EPA offers a search tool to help choose a repellent that is best for a particular situation. For example, some repellents work for mosquitoes, but not for ticks.

<https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/which-insect-repellent-right-you>

In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, which operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line (800) CDC-INFO (800-232-4636). You can check the CDC website at <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel>. Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health.html> (click on Travel Health).

**SUGGESTED READING:** A number of traditional booksellers and online stores list excellent inventories of field guides and other natural history resources that will help prepare you for this tour. We recommend [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) which has a wide selection; [www.buteobooks.com](http://www.buteobooks.com) and [www.nhbs.com](http://www.nhbs.com) which specialize in ornithology and natural history books; and [www.abebooks.com](http://www.abebooks.com) for out-of-print and hard-to-find titles.

## **Field Guides:**

### ***Birds***

Stephenson, Terry, and John Fanshawe; Illustrated by Brian Small, Norman Arlott, and John Gale. ***Field Guide to the Birds of East Africa***. Princeton Field Guides, Second Edition.

A comprehensive field guide to all the birds of Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Burundi and Rwanda. It includes concise text on identification and illustrations from three of the best bird illustrators working today. Also available as an app.

### ***Mammals***

Kingdon, Jonathan. ***The Kingdon Field Guide to African Mammals***. Princeton University Press, second edition, 2015.

A complete and informative guide to all of the land mammals of Africa. A concise text providing full information on identification, distribution, ecology, evolutionary relationships, and conservation status. An exceptional and highly recommended field guide.

### ***Reptiles***

Spawls, Steve, Kim Howell, Harald Hinkel and Michele Megeon. ***Field Guide to East African Reptiles***. New York: Bloomsbury Wildlife, 2022. Revised and updated.

The definitive field guide to the reptiles of this region.

### ***Dragonflies & Damselflies***



Klaas-Douwe, B Dijkstra, Viola Clausnitzer, and Guido Gryseels. ***The Damselflies and Dragonflies of Eastern Africa***. Royal Museum of Central Africa, 2014.

### **Fiction**

A wealth of reading material is available for the general East Africa region. The following titles are well-known choices that address a variety of topics.

The results of several long-term studies of the mammals have been published as popular books. Although older, the following titles stand the test of time. The best includes ***Among the Elephants*** by Iain Douglas-Hamilton (1975), ***The Serengeti Lion***, by George Schaller (1976), and ***Portraits in the Wild***, by Cynthia Moss (1975). If you have never been to East Africa, you may enjoy some of these titles about the region, history and wildlife: ***Out of Africa***, by Isak Dinesen (1937), ***Flame Trees of Thika***, by Elspeth Huxley (1959), and ***I Dreamed of Africa***, by Kuki Gulman (2007).

**TIPPING:** Tipping (restaurant staff, porters, local guides) is included on VENT tours. However, if you feel one or both of your VENT leaders or any local guides have given you exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that tips are not expected and are entirely optional. Tips should be given directly to your tour leader; they should not be sent to the VENT office.

**RESPONSIBILITY STATEMENT:** Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc., a Texas corporation, and/or its agents (together, “**VENT**”) act only as agents for the participant in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the participant or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT accepts no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in airfare or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, terrorism, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will be borne by the participant, as tour rates only provide for arrangements for the time stated.

VENT reserves the right (i) to substitute hotels of similar category, or the best reasonable substitution available under the circumstances, for those indicated and (ii) to make any changes in the itinerary that are deemed necessary by VENT or which are caused by third party transportation schedules (i.e. railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, etc.).

VENT reserves the right to substitute leaders or guides on any tour. Where VENT, in its sole discretion, determines such substitution is necessary, it will notify tour participants.

VENT reserves the right to cancel any tour prior to departure with or without cause or good reason. See the VENT Cancellation & Refunds policy set forth above.

Tour prices are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on September 4, 2024, and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change thereto.

VENT reserves the right to decline any participant’s Registration Form and/or refuse to allow any participant to participate in a tour as VENT deems reasonably necessary, in its sole discretion. VENT also reserves the right to remove any tour participant from any portion of a tour as VENT deems necessary, in its sole discretion, reasons for such removal include but are not limited to, medical needs, injury, illness, inability to meet physical demands of a tour, personality conflict or situations in which such removal is otherwise in the best interest of the tour, the tour group and/or such participant. A participant may also voluntarily depart from a tour. If a participant is removed from a tour or voluntarily departs from a tour,

such participant will be responsible for any expenses associated with such removal or departure, including but not limited to, transportation, lodging, airfare and meals, and VENT will have no obligation to refund or reimburse any such removed or departed participant for any tour payments or deposits previously paid by such participant.

Baggage is carried at the participant's risk entirely. No airline company, its employees, agents and/or affiliates (the "**Airline**") is to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time participants are not on board the Airline's aircraft. The participant ticket in use by any Airline, when issued, will constitute the sole contract between the Airline and the purchaser of the tickets and/or the participant. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for VENT tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airlines Reporting Corporation.

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