



VICTOR EMANUEL NATURE TOURS

ITINERARY

RWANDA

August 31–September 14, 2025



Mountain Gorilla is a premier drawcard for a tour to Rwanda.

The Republic of Rwanda is an East African country. It is centred on the Great Rift Valley south of the Equator well away from the coast. It has become a popular tourist destination in recent decades largely because of the excellent infrastructure, friendly people and the unique chance to see so much extraordinary wildlife in one relatively small nation.

On this tour we will visit three key areas. The first is Nyungwe Forest that is one of the premier forest birding destinations in all of Africa. These Albertine Rift ancient rainforests have been voted the number one birding destination in Africa by African birders. Beyond a whole raft of endemic and special and often colourful birds it is home to an extraordinary variety of primates. One of these is the Chimpanzee and during our stay here we will try our best to get a good wild connection with this extraordinary ape.

The second is the Volcanoes National Park set amidst the spectacular Virunga Volcanoes massif. Here on the higher slopes at around 1500-2000 metres (5000-6500 feet) can be found the most accessible Mountain Gorillas in East Africa. By purchasing a permit, we can be escorted to meet a family of gorillas in close proximity. We can spend an hour photographing and interacting (from a respectful distance) with these enormously powerful and incredibly charismatic peaceful primates. In fact, it was here that Dian Fossey led her ground-breaking research that undid many of the myths of gorilla behaviour. Volcanoes also offers fantastic birding and the chance to see other rare primates like the highly localised Golden Monkey.

Our third major destination is Akagera National Park. Located close to the border of Tanzania this is more of a typical East African savanna woodland safari location. It is managed by the world class African Parks NGO conservation group and holds rhinoceros, elephants, lions, buffalo, a great diversity of ungulates, smaller carnivores and a huge bird list. We will spend three to four full days at all of these locations giving us the time to seek out not only the charismatic mega-vertebrates but a fantastic diversity of special African birds and other animals.

August 31-September 1: Days 1–2: Travel to Rwanda; Arrival in Kigali: Tour participants should make plans to arrive in Kigali no later than the afternoon of September 1. Upon arrival in Kigali and clearing immigration and customs you will be transferred to your hotel. Here we will settle in and then meet for dinner with your fellow participants. Many of our participants find it worthwhile to arrive in Kigali the day before the first official group activities, allowing time to relax and recover from the overnight flight and the time change before launching into early mornings in the field. Upon request, the VENT office will be happy to assist with any additional lodging arrangements.

NIGHT: Radisson Blu, Kigali

September 2: Day 3: Birding Kigali: There is some good birding to be had in wetlands close to the city principally the Nyandungu Urban Wetland Eco-tourism Park amongst other sites. We can hope to see a good cross-section of widely distributed East African birds like the White-faced Whistling-Duck, giant Spur-winged Goose, Egyptian Goose, Speckled Pigeon, Red-eyed Dove, Blue-spotted Wood-Dove, Tambourine Dove, Yellow-billed and Marabou storks, Hamerkop, Pink-backed Pelican, Black-headed Heron, African Sacred and Hadada ibises, African Harrier-Hawk, Palm-nut Vulture, Long-crested Eagle, Black Kite, Speckled Mousebird, Malachite and Pied kingfishers, Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater, Spot-flanked Barbet, Cardinal Woodpecker, Brown-throated Wattle-eye, Tropical Boubou, Yellow-breasted

Apalis, Tawny-flanked Prinia, Gray-capped Warbler and Red-faced Cisticola. Scrubby thickets are typically alive with a variety of weavers (Slender-billed, Holub's Golden and Spectacled) and sunbirds

(Bronze and Red-chested). With luck we may find some scarcer species here like African Spoonbill, Blue-headed Coucal, Wahlberg's Honeyguide, African Hobby or Papyrus Gonolek.

NIGHT: Radisson Blu, Kigali



We hope to enjoy good views of Chimpanzee in Rwanda.

September 3: Day 4: Drive to Nyungwe NP: This morning we will make the fairly lengthy drive through to Nyungwe National Park aiming to get to our accommodation for lunch. This fantastic park has gained a well-deserved reputation for being one of the best forest birding locations in the entire African continent. Protecting more than 100 000 hectares of rainforest at a variety of altitudes there are pockets of wetlands, bamboo and flowering shrublands. All up more than 300 species of birds are recorded in Nyungwe. An exciting feature here is the canopy walkway about two hundred yards in length overlooking the Afromontane Forest giving us the chance to get on the same level with elusive canopy specialist birds.

NIGHT: Nyungwe Top Hill View Lodge, Kigali

September 4-6: Days 5-7: Nyungwe National Park: Three full days birding in Nyungwe will include the chance to track wild Chimpanzees for half a day. Birding is extraordinarily rich here with this amount of time it will give us the best possible chance to see an incredible variety of special forest birds.

The list of hoped for birds is quite long and includes the great majority of Albertine Rift endemics: Handsome Francolin, Great Blue and Black-billed turacos, the most unusual endemic Rwenzori Turaco, Barred Long-tailed Cuckoo, Crowned Eagle, Cassin's Hawk-Eagle, Mountain Buzzard, Red-chested Owlet, Narina and Bar-tailed trogons, White-headed Woodhoopoe, Black-and-white Casqued Hornbill, the rare endemic Dwarf Honeyguide, Olive Woodpecker, Gray and Black cuckooshrikes, Black-tailed Oriole, Rwenzori Batis, Northern Puffback, Luhder's Bushshrike, Albertine Boubou, Many-colored, Doherty's and with good fortune Lagden's Bushshrike, White-bellied Crested Flycatcher, Dusky Tit, the endemic Stripe-

breasted Tit, White-browed Crombec, Grauer's Warbler, Rwenzori, Kungwe, Gray, Chestnut-throated and Black-faced apalises, Banded Prinia, Cinnamon Bracken-Warbler, Grauer's Swamp-Warbler, Cabanis's, Yellow-whiskered, Eastern Mountain and Slender-billed greenbuls, the secretive and rare Neumann's Warbler, Rwenzori Hill Babbler, Green White-eye, Mountain Illadopsis, the most unusual Red-collared Mountain-Babbler (currently the only known global location for this species), Slender-billed, Waller's and Sharpe's starlings, Abyssinian Ground-Thrush, African Dusky, Yellow-eyed Black and White-eyed Slaty flycatchers, Archer's Robin-Chat, White-starred Robin, Red-throated Alethe, Equatorial Akalat, Abyssinian Thrush, Purple-breasted, Regal, Collared, Blue-headed, Stuhlmann's and Northern Double-collared sunbirds, Black-billed, Strange and Forest weavers, Dusky and Red-faced crimsonwings, Black-crowned Waxbill, Gray-headed Nigrita and hopefully the scarce Oriole Finch. Beyond these are some real global rarities like Gray-chested Babbler, Dusky Twinspot and the comically named Willard's Sooty Boubou, so we will certainly have plenty to look for and fortunately quite a good amount of time to try our best.

Chimpanzee tracking will take place in the Cyamudongo section of the forest. Much depends on forest fruiting events as these events particularly fig trees help attract the chimpanzee and concentrate them when the fruit is on. The walking can be off trail and uphill at times. The local wildlife rangers will have an excellent understanding of what the Chimpanzee are up to and we will follow their best advice.

Beyond the Chimpanzee there is a very rich diversity of forest monkeys many of them spectacular and very appealing. Highlights include the Angola Colobus, L'Hoest's Monkey, Dent's Monkey, Red-tailed Monkey, Silver Monkey and if we are very fortunate the elusive Owl-faced Monkey.

NIGHT: Nyungwe Top Hill View Lodge, Kigali

September 7: Day 8: Nyungwe National Park to Volcanoes National Park: After breakfast we will journey to Volcanoes National Park for a three-night stay at Mountain Gorilla View Lodge. The lodge and nearby national park offer continued birding opportunities. Species we hope to see include Dusky Turtle-Dove, White-tailed Blue Flycatcher, Chubb's Cisticola, Black Sawwing, Abyssinian Thrush, Cape Robin-Chat, White-browed Robin-Chat, African Stonechat, Bronze Sunbird, Black-crowned and possibly Kandt's Waxbill, with luck Red-headed Bluebill, Mountain Wagtail and Western Citril.

NIGHT: Five Volcanos Boutique Hotel, Ruhengeri

September 8: Day 9: Volcanoes National Park: Gorilla trekking: Today will be possibly the most anticipated day of the tour-perhaps the day you have been waiting for your entire life!

After breakfast we will meet at the wildlife headquarters for a briefing (explaining the dos and don'ts of approaching the gorillas) and to be assigned a family group of gorillas to trek towards. Groups are assigned based on tourist fitness. Typically, we will drive as close as practical and then commence hiking. Depending upon the group we are assigned the hike can vary from thirty minutes to three hours, rarely more.

Porters are available to carry your pack and assist you when hiking. It helps inject extra money into the local economy and provides great assistance so you can just enjoy your allotted one hour with the gorillas. Each gorilla family consists typically of a silverback, several females and their youngsters. Each family has a name and occupies a home range they move around and defend. Most of the gorillas' day is spent foraging and eating the large amounts of plant material they require daily. Each group is monitored and protected intensely by the national park staff. The money from the permits is partially allocated to the local communities to assist in building schools and other infra-structure. Only 96 permits are issued per day.

NIGHT: Five Volcanos Boutique Hotel, Ruhengeri

Special Notes About Gorilla Viewing: The demand for permits to view the gorillas is enormous. Permits are expensive, currently \$1500 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 sign up for the tour 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 tour. You will need to be reasonably fit to undertake the gorilla viewing walk, although the pace is kept appropriate to the participant's fitness. Normally the walk involves one to three hours but occasionally, if groups are on the distant edges of their territories, it may take up to four hours, although this is rare. 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, with some luck. On rare occasions it is possible to miss the gorillas completely. You will have more information available on the group whereabouts during the briefing.

September 9: Day 10: Volcanoes National Park: Birding and Golden Monkey trekking: Golden Monkeys are endemic to the Virunga volcano massif. These gentle monkeys feeding mostly on leaves, shoots and fruits occur at low density. Fortunately, there is one habituated troop of Golden Monkeys that are relatively approachable and typically not a difficult walk. If we are quiet and patient, they will often approach us for excellent photographic opportunities. We will always be birding and on the lookout for anything new and different including chameleons, squirrels and shyer mammals like the small forest antelopes called duikers.

NIGHT: Five Volcanos Boutique Hotel, Ruhengeri

September 10: Day 11: Volcanoes NP to Akagera National Park: Akagera National Park on the border of Tanzania is classic East Africa. With extensive wetlands, riparian forest corridors and savanna woodlands it protects over 400 bird species and an impressive cross-section of classic African mammals. It will take us 4-5 hours to make the journey today. By the afternoon we will be in a different world-the land of safari.

NIGHT: Ruzizi Tented Lodge, Akagera National Park

September 11-12: Days 12-13: Akagera National Park: It is possible to see African Elephant, Black Rhinoceros, Lion, Leopard and African Buffalo in Akagera. A true "Big Five" destination. Beyond these big-ticket items there is a fascinating variety of ungulates including Masai Giraffe, Bohor Reedbuck, Bushbuck, the rarely seen Sitatunga, Oribi, Klipspringer, Common Duiker, Bohor Reedbuck, Defassa Waterbuck, Roan Antelope, Impala, Topi, Burchell's Zebra, Cape Buffalo, Bush Pig, Warthog and Hippopotamus. A good cross-section of smaller carnivores also occurs, including five species of mongoose (Dwarf, Banded, White-tailed, Slender and Egyptian), Blotched Genet, the elusive Honey Badger, Stripesided Jackal and the extraordinary Spotted Hyaena. Primates include Olive Baboon, Vervet Monkey and the nocturnal Senegal Galago.



African Elephant is on the list for Akagera National Park.

As ever the open woodlands are perfect for birders guaranteeing almost constant activity and diversity delivering exciting action and an almost which way to look reaction! More than 400 species are recorded in the park including some quite localised and difficult African endemics like Ring-necked Francolin, Red-faced Barbet, White-winged Swamp-Warbler and the shy Papyrus Gonolek. There are even occasional records of the iconic Shoebill but it is far from guaranteed. On our radar will be on Hildebrandt's Spurfowl, Tambourine Dove, Mottled Swift, Square-tailed Nightjar, Klaas's Cuckoo, Senegal Lapwing, Goliath Heron, Bare-faced Go-away-bird, Ross's Turaco, Speckled and Blue-naped mousebirds, African Pygmy Kingfisher, Lilac-breasted Roller, Meyer's Parrot Orange-breasted Bushshrike, Tropical and Slate-colored boubous and White Helmetsrike amongst so many others!

On one morning we will do a scenic boat trip on Lake Ihema allowing us to get close to schools of Hippopotamus, African Fish-Eagles, Gray Crowned Cranes and Nile Crocodiles amongst many other species. We will also aim to do a night drive on one evening hoping for owls, nightjars, galagos, smaller carnivores and hopefully some larger carnivores which are often more active at night.

NIGHT: Ruzizi Tented Lodge, Akagera National Park

September 13: Day 14: Return from Akagera National Park to Kigali: After a morning safari we will pack up and head to Kigali. At dinner we will be able to relive our Rwanda adventure with so many great bird and mammal sightings to last a lifetime.

NIGHT: Radisson Blu, Kigali

September 14: Day 15: Fly home: Return flights can be scheduled today. If you wish to stay on and explore Rwanda further, please do not hesitate to contact the great VENT team for further arrangements.

TOUR SIZE: This tour will be limited to 8 participants.

TOUR LEADER: Dion Hobcroft (assisted by a local leader)



Dion Hobcroft has been working for VENT since 2001. He has led many tours (more than 180) to Australia, New Guinea, New Zealand, Bhutan, Indonesia, India, China, Southwest Pacific, Philippines, Cambodia, Thailand, Malawi, Myanmar, Japan, Russia, Alaska, Tanzania, Uganda, Madagascar, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and the Antarctic. In 2007 and 2013–2019, 2022–24 alone, Dion showed more than 2,000 species of birds to VENT clients. His informative, relaxed, and educational nature, combined with sharp eyes and ears, has established Dion as a favorite of many tour participants. His fieldwork for over 40 years on birds and other terrestrial vertebrates has allowed him to amass an extraordinary knowledge of the biodiversity in the Afro-Asia-Pacific region. Born in Tasmania and based in Sydney, Dion has travelled widely throughout Australasia, listing over 1,200 species, placing him in the top echelons of the region’s birders. He is very tuned-in to the songs of bird species in the Afro-Asia-Pacific region and specializes in rare and elusive species. He is delighted to show these skulking rarities to his travel companions. Dion has published several papers on field ornithology, served on national and state rare bird committees, managed *Birdline NSW*, run introduction to ornithology courses for Sydney University, and, before he travelled so continuously, was a popular speaker with various natural history societies. Dion has worked for many research and government agencies ranging from the Antarctic Division, Department of Environment NSW, Agriculture Protection WA, Taronga Zoo, Australian Museum, and the Queensland Department of Primary Industry. Dion lives in Sydney with his wife, Lise, and two children, Grace (age 22) and Daniel (age 18).

IMPORTANT: Please refrain from bringing plastic bags to Rwanda. Banned by law since 2008, any plastic bags in your luggage will be confiscated at the airport.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for this tour is **\$17,995** per person based on double occupancy from Kigali, Rwanda. This fee includes all meals beginning with dinner on Day 2 ending with breakfast on Day 14, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation, park entrance fees, gratuities, and guide services provided by the tour leader and local guides. Tour fees do not include airfare from your home to Kigali 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 **\$2,685**. 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 \$1,500 (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.

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.

REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT: To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The initial deposit for this tour is **\$1,000** per person. A second deposit of **\$3,000** is due 210 days prior to departure (February 1, 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 (April 3, 2025).

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

*Unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be \$100 per person. To qualify, cancellation must occur 180 days or more before departure date; deposit transfers must be made at the time of cancellation; and one transfer per deposit.

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.

FUEL AND 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.

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 travellers, 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; 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 first trip payment. 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, and insure all non-refundable trip cost in order to maintain the CFAR benefit. 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 travellers 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/

Additionally, as countries begin opening up for travel, many are instituting an array of COVID-19 entry requirements, including mandates to purchase travel insurance covering medical expenses due to COVID-19 Illness and accommodation in case of quarantine. Ripcord's comprehensive travel insurance plans are designed to satisfy the various country-specific travel insurance entry requirements. Those who purchase a Ripcord policy will receive a "letter of confirmation" that affirms that the policy satisfies such requirements.

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.

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 travellers 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 traveller with the traveller's consent. A purchase is considered final upon receipt of payment. If a ticket is subsequently reissued at the behest of the traveller (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: While on this tour you will be travelling in a high clearance, air-conditioned land cruisers with large windows that can be opened. Space in the land cruiser is quite 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 yourself to one medium-sized soft-sided wheeled suitcase or duffel bag and one carry-on bag.** Laundry services are available everywhere that we spend more than one night, so you need only a few changes of clothing. Please use the VENT luggage tag that will be sent to you, as it helps immensely in identifying our group's baggage.

CONDITIONS: This tour does not require a high level of fitness but participants should be in good general health as much of the forest birding will be done on foot and may require walking for several hours at a time. On just a few occasions, we may be walking on narrow and/or steep forest trails (entirely optional) to find a few special birds. Our pace will, however, be slow as we bird in the forests. There will be a few lengthy drives and many of the days will be long with early starts; however, we retire for a siesta during the heat of the day when possible.

Should you have any physical limitations, please notify us in advance of departure.

The **optional** gorilla trek at Volcanoes National Park (see Day 9) can involve several hours of potentially strenuous walking on steep slopes, often off-trail. The chance of finding the gorillas is very high, but on some occasions in the past the trackers have not been able to locate the mobile family groups.

While many roads in Rwanda are remarkably good, many areas still require work. We will also be driving
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on dirt tracks such as in Akagera National Park and Nyungwe National Park, and at times some of those roads will be bumpy.

CLIMATE: The temperatures will be warm to hot (80's) during the day and pleasantly warm to cool (60's) at night. Night temperatures are cooler at a few places particularly Volcanoes National Park, reaching the low 50's, while midday temperatures may locally reach into the 90's. We can expect some showers and misty-foggy weather, especially in the mountains.

CLOTHING: Long-sleeved and light-weight shirts and pants are appropriate, with a sweater or light jacket for the evening, and a thermal top for "layering." Neutral colors such as gray, khaki, and tan are best for field wear (bright colors and patterns, including white, can spook the birds and animals). Please note Tsetse flies (present in some parts of Akagera National Park) are attracted to bright blue so this is not recommended in the narrow zones where they are a nuisance. Clothing that can be easily rinsed out and dried quickly is helpful. Dress will be casual throughout the tour. There is no need to bring formal dinner attire. The hotels are not heated, so bring something warm to sleep in. You will need good, solid but comfortable walking boots as we will be walking quite a bit in forest areas, albeit mostly along level or slightly rising and falling terrain. On some days, shorts will be appropriate, and a few of the hotels have swimming pools. Please remember that luggage space in the bus is limited, and laundry can be done at every lodge.

CURRENCY: Rwanda Franc; currency can be exchanged at the airport banks and major hotels upon arrival. MasterCard and Visa are accepted in major hotels, while American Express has limited acceptance. ATMs may be available at a few select stops if you need additional cash but you will need to notify your bank of your travel plans. U.S. currency notes need to be in mint condition and printed after 2013, otherwise they are difficult to exchange.

DOCUMENTS: A passport valid for at least six months with at least one blank page for entry stamp and a visa are required for United States citizens to enter Rwanda. Non-U.S. citizens should check with their consulate/embassy for instructions. **Currently (July 2023) US citizens can get a free 30-day tourist visa on arrival but this may change so it is essential to check what the latest arrangements are well before you travel.**

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.

EQUIPMENT: You should have a pair of binoculars that are in good condition, along with a day-pack for carrying books, sunscreen, etc. Your tour leader will have a spotting scope; however, you are welcome to bring your own if you so desire. 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. And yes, do bring a folding umbrella and/or rain jacket, as we may well encounter mist or rain on a few occasions.

Other items that will be useful are a hat and sunscreen for sun protection, small flashlight or headlamp, alarm clock, and a small amount of non-aerosol insect repellent (insects are remarkably few, but the best way to avoid any chance of disease is not to get bitten). You may also want to have a small supply of snacks. Moist towelettes are also refreshing to have. Pepto-Bismol is recommended in case of mild stomach upset. Bottled water is available throughout Rwanda, so a water bottle is not necessary. All participants should bring a good supply of all of their medical/pharmaceutical supplies, as they will be very difficult to obtain anywhere on the tour.

HEALTH: A current certificate for Yellow Fever Vaccination is currently not required for entry into Rwanda.

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.

Malaria is present in Rwanda and participants are recommended to avoid mosquito bites as much as possible. Anti-malarial medications are available to reduce the risk and should be discussed with your doctor.

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 and **be aware of the ban on plastic bags in Rwanda.**

COVID-19: We continually emphasize that our number one priority is the health and safety of our customers and employees. Although VENT no longer maintains any of its COVID-era prevention protocols, we strongly recommend best practices for protecting yourself and your fellow travellers 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. These recommendations are firmly rooted in CDC guidance regarding recommendations for avoiding COVID-19. Please visit the Coronavirus Travel Update page of our website <https://ventbird.com/covid-19> for our official statement regarding COVID-19 and the operation of our tours. Please visit the CDC website for the most up to date information about COVID-19 and associated guidance for proper health and hygiene: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>. Food standards are high in Rwanda and few people experience any problems. We recommend drinking only bottled water (available everywhere) or filtered water provided by the lodges.

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.

Insect repellents for the skin are commonly available in three forms:

- DEET (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.

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).

MISCELLANEOUS:

Electricity – 230 volts, 50 Hz. Plug types C (two round pins) and J (three round pins).

Language – Kinyarwanda, French and English are the official national languages.

Time – Central Africa Time (GMT +2 hours)

INTERNET: Available at most of the hotels we stay in, generally in the lobby only. The Wi-Fi is often fairly slow. Mobile phone coverage is very good and you can text from most locations.

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 which has a wide selection; <http://www.amazon.com/> and www.nhbs.com which specialize in ornithology and natural history books; and www.abebooks.com for out-of-print and hard-to-find titles.

Birds (Field Guides):

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. One of the best bird books ever written! Also available as an app.

Field Guides (other topics):

Kingdon, Jonathan. *The Kingdon Field Guide to African Mammals*. Academic Press Inc., 1998. A complete and informative guide to all of the mammals. All the known species of African land mammal are covered in a concise text providing full information on identification, distribution, ecology, evolutionary relationships, and conservation status.

There is a wealth of reading material available for this region, and the following are just a few selections from various topics. A personal favorite is *The Tree Where Man Was Born/The African Experience* by Peter Matthiessen and Eliot Porter. The results of several long-term studies of the mammals have been published as popular books. The best includes *Among the Elephants* by Iain Douglas-Hamilton, *The Serengeti Lion* by George Schaller, and *Portraits in the Wild* by Cynthia Moss. Especially if you have never been to East

Africa, you may enjoy some of these “light” books about the region, history and wildlife: *Out of Africa* by Isak Dinesen, *Flame Trees of Thika* by Elspeth Huxley, *I Dreamed of Africa* by Kuki Gulman, and *A Bird Watcher in Kenya* by C. van Someren. *Nine Faces of Kenya*, compiled by Elspeth Huxley, is a good introductory primer to East African history and settlement.

TIPPING: Tipping (restaurant staff, porters, drivers, 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 16, 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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