

Mountain Gorillas in Uganda



There are two subspecies of the Eastern Gorilla, and the the Mountain Gorilla (*Gorilla beringei beringei*) is one of them. The gorillas are divided in two populations. One of them is found in Bwindi Impenetrable National Park in south west of Uganda. The other population is located in the Virunga volcanic mountains within three national parks:

- Mgahinga national park in south-west Uganda
- Volcanoes national park in north-west Rwanda
- Virunga national park in the eastern part of Democratic Republic of Congo

Mountain gorillas reach impressive dimensions: males reach up to 1.9 m (6 ft 3 in) in height, the arm span reaches of 2.3 m (7 ft 7 in) and they weigh up to 220 kg (490 lb). The females usually weigh half as much as males. The Mountain Gorillas pelt enables them to live in colder temperatures and it is thicker and longer than that of other gorillas. Because of gray or silver-colored hair on their backs the adult males are called silverbacks. This hair is shorter than on other body parts. Also their arm hair is especially longer.

Most of the time the Mountain Gorilla live on the forest floor. But they also climb trees for fruits, and the arms are longer than the legs. During the day they are active between 6:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m., and most of their time they spend for eating.

The Mountain Gorilla is an herbivore, preferring leaves, shoots and stems of more than 100 plant species. Bark, fruits, flowers and roots complete their menu. Males consume more than 30 kg (>70 lb), while females eat around 18 kg (40 lb). Gorillas build nests with material from surrounding vegetation, and normally they build a new one every evening.



In their first months a newborn Mountain gorilla rides on their mother's backs, and the weight is around 1.8 kilograms (4.0 lb). Young gorillas start walking after five months. After breastfeeding for four to six months they start eating leaves, too.

Mountain gorillas live together in groups, staying together for long times, lead by a silverback. The leader does not defend a special territorial, but his group. The group size varies from five up to 30 individuals, and the majority has only one adult male. Males normally leave their natal group after ten years.

Gorilla silverbacks determine where the group moves. The do not only protect the group from external dangers, but they also are somewhat like a mediator in case of inner conflicts.

Gorilla safaris and gorilla trekking in Bwindi national park, Uganda

Bwindi is home to almost a half of the world's population of 600 mountain gorillas. There are four gorilla groups available daily for gorilla safari tourists:

- Mubare group (10 gorillas, 1 gorilla silverback) since 1939
- Habinyanja group (18 gorillas, 1 gorilla silverback) since 1998
- Rushegura group (10 gorillas, 1 gorilla silverback) since 2002
- Nkuringo group (19 gorillas, 2 gorilla silverbacks) since 2004.

To protect the the mountain gorillas, gorilla trekking is strongly restricted. Only one group of eight tourists is allowed to stay with a gorilla group per day, and this only for one hour. All group members must be healthy. To ensure that requested dates are available you should book at least 3 months in advance.



Gorilla trekking in Bwindi could lead to long walks through rain forest (some ours or the whole day), therefore physical fitness is an advantage. Gorilla trekking starts at 8.30 a.m. You should not forget the following in your equipment:

- trekking shoes and rain jacket
- rain gear, sunscreen lotion, hat, insect repellent.
- lunch

The following rules apply and must be strictly adhered to:

- Nobody with a communicable disease is allowed to enter the park (e.g Flu, diarrhoea) for gorilla safari
- Gorilla trekking groups have to stay together in the near of the gorillas with a distance of at least 7 meters (21 feet).
- No persons under 15 years is allowed for gorilla trekking
- No flashes while photographing gorillas
- Don't eat or smoke within a distance to the gorillas of 200 meters, don't leave litter anywhere

For non-residents the fee is US\$ 500 per person. For more information contact:

Uganda Wildlife Authority Plot 7 Kira Road, Kamwokya P.O. Box 3530 Kampala, Uganda Tel: +256-41-346287,355000 Fax: +256-41-346291 E-Mail: uwa@uwa.or.ug Web: www.uwa.or.ug

or

Bwindi Impenetrable National Park P.O. Box 862 Kabale, Uganda Tel: +256-486-24121 E-Mail: gorilla.bmca@uwa.or.ug, Web: www.uwa.or.ug

or

Uganda Tourist Board Impala House, Kimathi Avenue, P.O. Box 7211, Kampala Uganda Tel:

+256-41-342196/7 Fax: 256-41-342188 E-Mail: utb@starcom.co.ug, Web: www.visituganda.com

What an amazing video with mountain gorillas!

See this video showing a group of mountain gorillas visiting the camp in Bwindi national park.
