# Uganda

## Relaxed



**Shoebill David Hoddinott**

*From the papyrus swamps of Lake Victoria, home to the legendary Shoebill, to the rich forests of Kibale alive with Chimpanzees, and the montane slopes of Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, where Mountain Gorillas still survive, Uganda offers a remarkable array of landscapes and wildlife experiences within a compact area. The lush savannas of Queen Elizabeth National Park, complete with tree-climbing lions and a Kazinga Channel cruise, contrast with the rolling acacia woodlands of Lake Mburo, ensuring a superb variety of birds and mammals. Few countries in Africa can match such a blend of wetlands, tropical forests, and open plains, and this richness is reflected in Uganda's astounding bird list of over 1,000 species. Highlights of this journey include the unique Shoebill, a wealth of Albertine Rift endemics, and the unforgettable opportunity to track both Mountain Gorillas and Chimpanzees – all while enjoying excellent game viewing in some of East Africa's most beautiful reserves.*

## *Itinerary & Map*

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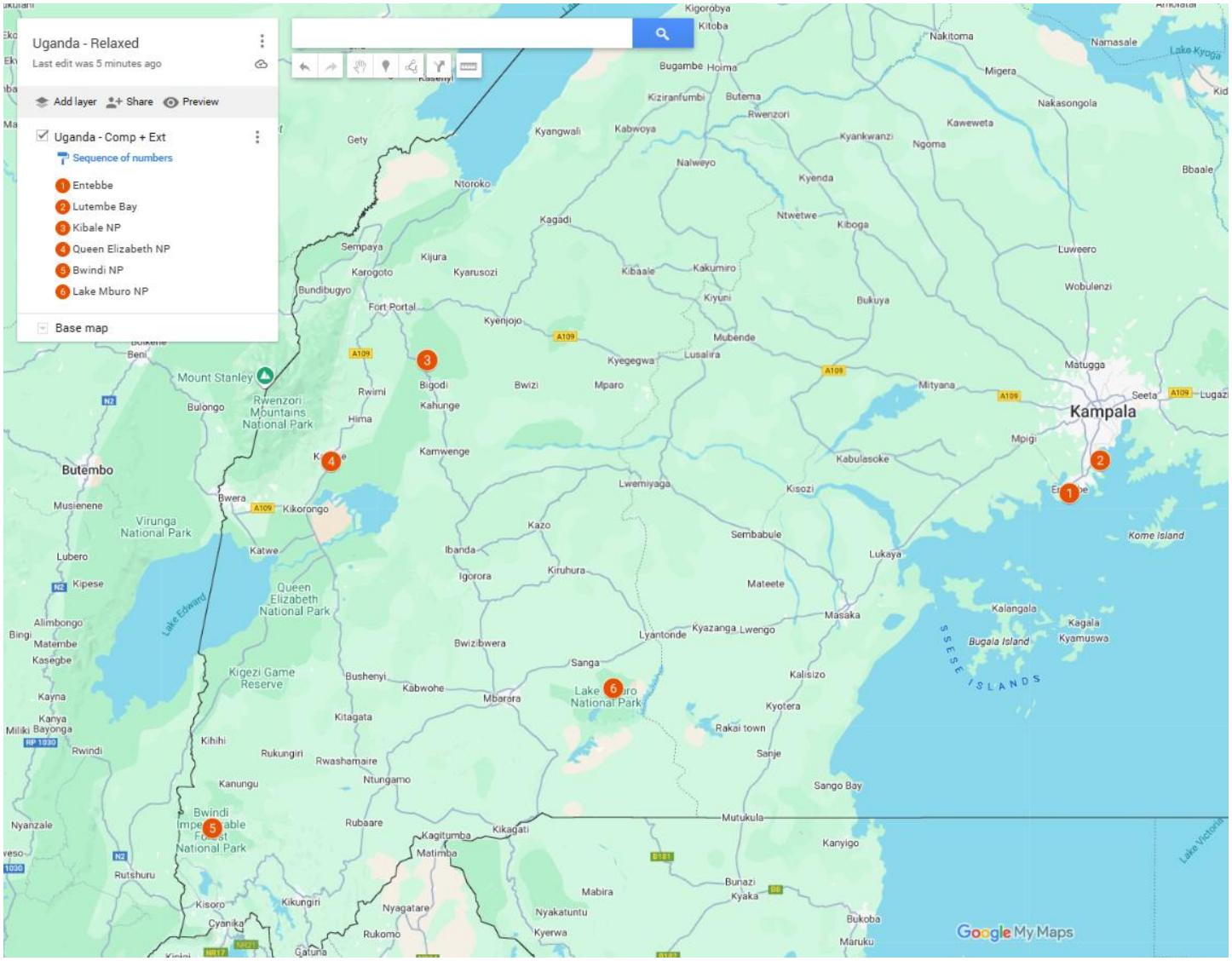
| **Day 1** | **Arrive in Entebbe** |
| **Day 2** | **Mabamba Swamp** |
| **Day 3** | **Lutembe Bay & Entebbe Botanical Gardens** |
| **Day 4** | **Entebbe to Kibale National Park** |
| **Day 5** | **Kibale National Park – Optional Chimpanzee tracking & birding** |
| **Day 6** | **Kibale to Queen Elizabeth National Park** |
| **Day 7** | **Queen Elizabeth National Park - Kasenyi Track & Kazinga Channel cruise** |
| **Day 8** | **Ishasha, Queen Elizabeth National Park to Bwindi Impenetrable National Park** |
| **Day 9** | **Bwindi Impenetrable National Park - Buhoma** |
| **Day 10** | **Buhoma to Ruhija via Kitahurira (The Neck)** |
| **Day 11** | **Ruhija - Optional Gorilla tracking & birding** |
| **Day 12** | **Ruhija to Lake Mburo National Park** |
| **Day 13** | **Lake Mburo National Park** |
| **Day 14** | **Lake Mburo National Park to Entebbe & final departure** |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Sequence of numbers
1 Entebbe
2 Lutembe Bay
3 Kibale NP
4 Queen Elizabeth NP
5 Bwindi NP
6 Lake Mburo NP
Base map
Kampala
Entebbe
Lutembe Bay
Kibale NP
Queen Elizabeth NP
Bwindi NP
Lake Mburo NP
Mount Stanley
Rwenzori Mountains National Park
Butembo
Virunga National Park
Queen Elizabeth National Park
Kigezi Game Reserve
Lake Mburo National Park
Bwindi Impenetrable Forest National Park
Lake Edward
Lake Victoria
Bugala Island
Kome Island
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## *Birding sites in detail*



**Red-headed Lovebird by David Hoddinott**

**Mabamba Swamp.** We begin our Ugandan adventure in search of a very special bird. Our prime target for today is the legendary Shoebill and we will set off through small rural villages and homesteads to Mabamba, which is a large wetland connected to Lake Victoria. This extensive papyrus swamp is home to several pairs of Shoebill, Uganda's most famous avian resident and the prime attraction to the nation for most birders. This charismatic species, the only representative of its family, is certainly amongst the most highly prized birds in the world! We will commission a boat from the nearby fishing village and search the maze of channels in an attempt to find this special species. Other water birds abound and we should find several species of herons, egrets and waterfowl, the ever-present African Fish Eagle, Blue-breasted Bee-eater, African Marsh Harrier, Purple Swamphen, Long-toed Lapwing, African and the tricky Lesser Jacanas, Malachite Kingfisher, and African Pygmy Goose. The papyrus holds the endearing Swamp Flycatcher, Blue-headed Coucal, Greater and White-winged Swamp Warblers, Grey-capped Warbler, the indescribable Papyrus Gonolek, and the nomadic and unpredictable Weyns's Weaver. If we are exceptionally fortunate, we may also see the rare Sitatunga, a shy swamp-dwelling antelope with splayed hooves.

Thereafter, we will bird the surrounding grasslands, papyrus swamps and farm bush. Here we might expect to see the funky-looking Long-crested Eagle perched atop telephone poles, Wahlberg's Eagle, Palm-nut Vulture, hovering Black-winged Kite, African Harrier-Hawk, Lizard Buzzard, the truly impressive Great Blue Turaco, raucous Eastern Plantain-eater, seemingly awkward Black-and-white Casqued Hornbill and floppy-flighted Crowned and African Pied Hornbills, dazzling-blue Woodland Kingfisher, Broad-billed Roller, Brown-throated Wattle-eye, Splendid and Rüppell's Starlings, African Thrush, Northern Black Flycatcher, Sooty Chat, gregarious Grey-backed Fiscal, Scarlet-chested, Superb and Red-chested Sunbirds as well as the comical Pin-tailed Whydah. Should we have missed it in the swamps, we have another chance to find the scare and nomadic Weyns's Weaver.



**Great Blue Turaco by Daniel Danckwerts**

**Entebbe Botanical Gardens.** Situated just a short distance away from our hotel. Our primary target here is the gorgeous Orange Weaver – small, loose



Grey Parrots by Stephan Lorenz

breeding colonies are usually present in the trees at the very edge of Lake Victoria. Other conspicuous species in the botanical gardens include both Ross's and Great Blue Turacos, Grey Parrot, Eastern Plaintain-eater, Black-and-white Casqued Hornbill, and the Woodland Kingfisher. Overhead we will watch for Hooded Vulture, Black Kites, and Pied Crows and we'll certainly find the grotesque-looking Marabou Stork. In a small remnant patch of forest, we may also find Guereza – an incredibly striking black-and-white primate with a long bushy tail.

**Lutembe Bay.** This Ramsar-listed wetland at the northern edge of Lake Victoria, is among Uganda's most productive birding sites. From November to March, large numbers of Palearctic migrants concentrate here, with White-winged Terns often numbering in the tens of thousands, joined by Whiskered and Gull-billed Terns. Waders are also at their peak, with species such as Curlew Sandpiper, Little Stint, Ruff, and Common Greenshank feeding along the shallows beside Black-winged Stilts. The papyrus margins and scrub host Papyrus Gonolek, Malachite Kingfisher, and Slender-billed Weaver whilst sandbanks hold Grey-headed Gulls and Reed Cormorants, while African Skimmers are sometimes found. The bay also supports large gatherings of Yellow-billed Ducks, Spur-winged Lapwings, and African Openbills.

**Entebbe to Kibale National Park.** We will be stopping at any likely looking habitats en route. A small wetland at the roadside often supports the localised Marsh Widowbird in addition to the abundant Yellow-mantled and Fan-tailed Widowbirds. Further stops will be in an area of rich farm bush where Red-headed Lovebird, African Yellow Warbler, Ross's Turaco, African Blue Flycatcher, Brown-backed Scrub Robin, Compact Weaver, Orange-tufted Sunbird, Orange-breasted Waxbill, Brown Twinspot and the beautiful Grey-headed Oliveback may be found. Further on, papyrus swamps hold the stunning Papyrus Gonolek and skulking White-winged Swamp Warbler; the latter species requiring patience to see.



Greater Honeyguide by Clayton Burne

**Kibale National Park.** The towering Kibale Forest has the highest primate concentration and species diversity of any reserve in East Africa. Primate highlights might include sightings of localised



**Chimpanzee by Daniel Danckwerts**

Ugandan Red Colobus, handsome L'Hoest's Monkey and the scruffy Grey-cheeked Mangabey. We have the opportunity for an optional Chimpanzee trek and our chances of finding these, one of our closest living relatives, are excellent! The birds are typical of the medium-altitude forest, with excellent mixed species flocks and specials such as Afep and the rare and globally threatened White-naped Pigeon, Red-chested Owlet, Blue-throated Roller, Narina Trogon, African Shrike-flycatcher, Scaly-breasted and Brown Illadopsis, Superb and Green-headed Sunbirds, Black-billed Turaco, Plain Greenbul, Chestnut Wattle-eye and Black-and-white Mannikin. We may also find African Emerald Cuckoo, Black-and-white Shrike-flycatcher, Many-colored and Lühder's Bushshrikes, Narrow-tailed and Chestnut-winged Starlings, Tiny and Blue-throated Brown Sunbirds and Dark-backed Weaver. At night we may encounter African Wood Owl and Verreaux's Eagle-Owl around our lodging.

**Queen Elizabeth National Park.** After passing beautiful crater lakes and the foothills of the mighty Rwenzori Mountains, we arrive at the famous Queen Elizabeth National Park, formerly known as Kazinga National Park but renamed in the Queen's honour after her visit in 1954.

We will spend a morning birding in the spectacular Crater area in the foothills of the Rwenzori Mountains and the main game-viewing area along the Kasenyi Track. The area can be particularly productive for raptors and species that will be the focus of our search include Rüppell's Vulture, Bateleur (one of Africa's most spectacular raptors), Brown Snake Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, and Grey Kestrel.

Queen Elizabeth National Park also offers a wonderful variety of grassland-dominated habitats which hold Red-necked Spurfowl, Harlequin Quail, Common Buttonquail, African Crake, Temminck's Courser, Senegal and Crowned Lapwings, the marsh-dwelling Black Coucal, Marsh Tchagra, Southern Red Bishop, flocks of Red-billed Quelea and Quailfinch, while Black-lored Babbler, Greater Honeyguide and Red-billed Firefinch occur in the surrounding woodlands.



**Papyrus Gonolek by Adam Riley**



Narrow-tailed Starlings by David Hoddinott

Mammals will also be a highlight in this area, and we are likely to encounter herds of African Elephant and African Buffalo, Uganda Kob, Southern Bushbuck and Common Warthog, while we'd be very fortunate to see Lion, Leopard, Spotted Hyaena or the impressive Giant Forest Hog, the largest and undeniably ugliest pig on Earth!

One of the undoubted tour highlights will be our afternoon boat trip on the Kazinga Channel that links Lakes George and Edward, allowing a very close approach and intimate encounters with African Buffalo, African Elephant, and Common Hippopotamus, as well as numerous waterbirds. Among many other species, we're likely to encounter large numbers of African Skimmer and Pied Kingfisher, as well as Pink-backed and Great White Pelicans, White-breasted Cormorant, African Openbill, Saddle-billed Stork, Hamerkop, Glossy Ibis, African Wattled and Spur-winged Lapwings, Water Thick-knee, Grey-headed Gull, White-winged and Gull-billed Terns, Malachite Kingfisher, Collared Pratincole, Swamp Flycatcher, Lesser Swamp Warbler, Winding Cisticola and plenty of nesting weavers. In the evening, we find Square-tailed Nightjars around dusk.

If conditions allow, we will drive through the extensive southern Ishasha section of Queen Elizabeth National Park en-route to Bwindi. Savanna bird and mammal species are likely to be seen and we may be fortunate in sighting Ishasha's famous tree-climbing Lions.

**Bwindi Impenetrable National Park.** The famous Bwindi Impenetrable National Park is a bastion for gorilla conservation and a hotspot for Albertine Rift Endemics. The Park is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is home to approximately half of the world population of 1 000 Mountain Gorillas. This vast reserve offers arguably some of the most productive montane forest birding in Africa and supports almost the entire suite of Albertine Rift endemic bird species. Once part of a much larger forest that included the Virunga Volcanoes in neighbouring Rwanda, Bwindi Impenetrable National Park is now an ecological island within a sea of human cultivation and therefore of immense conservation importance.



Black Bee-eater by David Hoddinott

**Bwindi Impenetrable National Park - Buhoma.** Buhoma lies in the valley of the Munyaga River at 1 500m above sea level, and is flanked by steep, forested



**Mountain Gorilla by David Hoddinott**

hills. Excellent forest birding, not least the prospect of numerous localised Albertine Rift endemics, makes this a true birding hotspot.

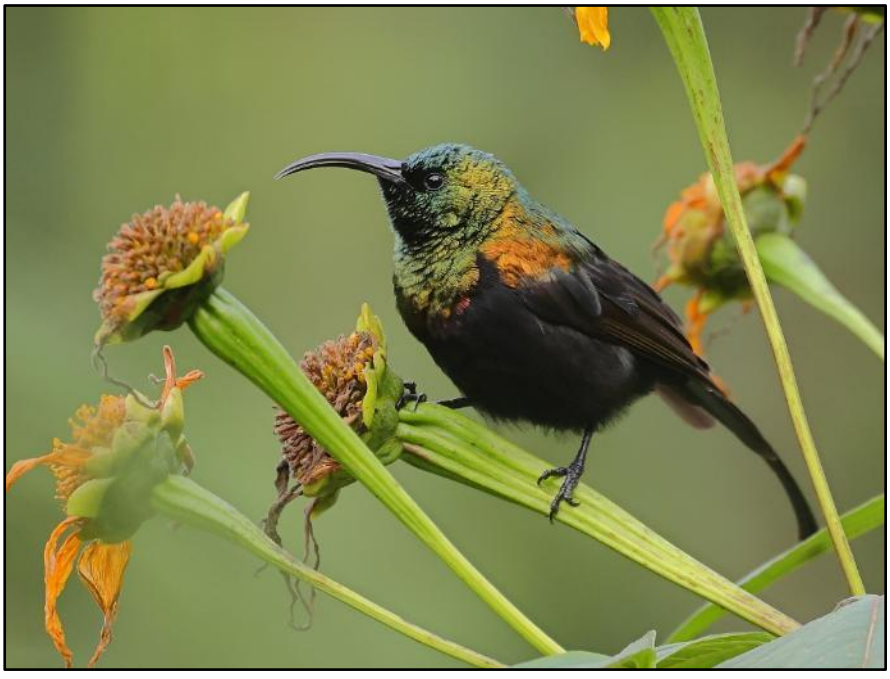
We will spend our time birding along the famous and bird-rich Buhoma Track that leads into the mid-elevation forest of Bwindi just past the town of Buhoma. Species we will search for include Bar-tailed Trogon, Dusky Tit, Abyssinian (Kivu) Ground Thrush, White-bellied Robin-Chat, White-bellied Crested Flycatcher, White-eyed Slaty Flycatcher, Northern Double-collared Sunbird, Willcocks's and Least Honeyguides, the newly described Willard's Sooty Boubou, Black-billed Weaver and Magpie Mannikin.

High exposed perches in the open forest are favoured by African Goshawk, the dazzling Black Bee-eater, Sooty Flycatcher and forest starlings including Waller's, Stuhlmann's and Narrow-tailed.

One of Bwindi's star avian attractions is the diminutive, pitta-like Neumann's Warbler, a vocal yet very secretive bird! We will require luck and patience to see this skulker – one of the Albertine Rift endemics. Other wildlife that we may be fortunate enough to find here includes Black-fronted and the huge Yellow-backed Duiker, Guereza, L'Hoest's, Blue and Red-tailed Monkeys, Chimpanzee and several species of squirrels, including Fire-footed Rope, Carruthers' Mountain, Rwenzori Sun and Red-legged Sun Squirrels.

**Buhoma to Ruhija via Kitahurira (The Neck).** Although the distance is not large, we will spend an entire day on this route due to the superb birding it provides. In scrubby areas beyond Buhoma, we will search for Ross's Turaco, Red-throated Wryneck, Brown-backed Scrub Robin, Bronzy, Copper and Variable Sunbirds, Baglafecht and Black-necked Weavers, Yellow Bishop, Village Indigobird, Red-headed Bluebill and Black-throated Canary.

Further along the road, we will pass through Kitahurira or "The Neck,' another well-known birding locality. Here we will search for species that could include Black Sparrowhawk, Western Bronze-naped Pigeon, Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater, Cassin's Honeybird, Petit's Cuckooshrike, White-chinned Prinia, Mountain Wagtail, Pink-footed Puffback, the rare Tiny Sunbird and the attractive Brown-capped Weaver.



**Bronzy Sunbird by David Hoddinott**



**Regal Sunbird by Adam Riley**

Even further up the road, cultivated areas provide feeding opportunities for many seedeaters. Our main targets here will be the sought-after Dusky Twinspot and Yellow-bellied, Kandt's and Black-crowned Waxbills, African Stonechat, Streaky and Thick-billed Seedeaters, Western Citril and Yellow-crowned Canary. The noisy Chubb's Cisticola will mock us from deep within the bracken, and the beautiful Doherty's Bushshrike can be lured out from the dense vegetation. Mackinnon's Shrikes survey the road from high, exposed perches and will be a regular feature throughout today.

**Ruhija, Bwindi Impenetrable National Park.** Ruhija is a seldom-visited higher camp in Bwindi Impenetrable National Park. The ranger station at Ruhija is situated at an altitude of 2 250m above sea level, with breath-taking views over steep, forested valleys toward the distant Virunga Volcanoes. Ruhija is likely to be one of the highlights of any trip to Uganda with excellent birding in spectacular surroundings.

**Those departing on an optional gorilla trekking adventure will search for a habituated family group of Eastern (Mountain) Gorillas. Spending an hour with these gentle giants is, without a doubt, one of the greatest wildlife experiences on Earth!*

**Lake Mburo National Park.** We have time to explore the incredible wetland and Acacia savanna sanctuary that hosts some very special species. Raptor watching will be a major feature and potential targets will include African Marsh Harrier, White-backed, Lappet-faced and White-headed Vultures, Brown Snake Eagle and African Hawk-Eagle. Lake Mburo's woodlands are the northern-most example of the southern savanna system and are therefore home to several species at the edge of their range. Most sought-after of these is the elusive and highly-localised Red-faced Barbet, known only from remote north-eastern Tanzania, Rwanda, and here, while other specials include the aptly-named Long-tailed Cisticola and Green-capped Eremomela.



**Bar-tailed Trogon by Glen Valentine**

We will also search for Crested and Coqui Francolins, Emerald-spotted Wood Dove, Red-chested, Jacobin, Levaillant's, and African Cuckoos, Blue-naped Mousebird, Lilac-breasted Roller, Striped Kingfisher, Green Wood Hoopoe, Common Scimitarbill, Spot-flanked, Crested and Black-collared Barbets, Bearded and the uncommon



**Rothschild's Giraffe by Keith Valentine**

Golden-tailed and Bearded Woodpeckers, several swallows including Lesser Striped, Red-breasted, Mosque, Red-rumped and White-headed Saw-wing, Black Cuckooshrike, White-browed Scrub Robin, Trilling Cisticola, the meadowlark-like Yellow-throated Longclaw, Chinspot Batis, Yellow-billed Oxpecker, Grey Penduline Tit, Arrow-marked Babbler, Brubru, Wattled Starling, Greater Blue-eared Starling, Marico Sunbird and Red-headed Weaver.

Mammals are also a feature of Lake Mburo National Park and we stand a good chance of seeing Banded and Common Dwarf Mongooses surveying the world from atop their adopted termite mounds, Plains Zebra, Common Hippopotamus, Common Warthog, Eland (the world's largest antelope), Waterbuck, Bohor Reedbuck, Impala, Oribi, Giraffe and Topi. Just outside the park, we will come across some of the world-famous long-horned Ankole cattle – always a highlight to see.

## *Tour Grading & Key*

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| **Overall Ease** |  | Suitable for most birding / wildlife interest levels. |
| **Birding Ease** |  | Forest birding is moderately difficult. Gorilla trekking can be challenging, dependent on location of family groups. |
| **Accommodation** |  | Variable. Modern & comfortable at most sites. |
| **Walking / Trails** |  | Varies from comfortable boats & 4x4 based birding to forest trails. |
| **Vehicles / Roads** |  | 4x4 Landcruiser vehicles. Some long drives mostly on mostly sealed roads, prone to having potholes & livestock. |
| **Photography** |  | Average to good. Forest photography has typical lighting challenges. Better lighting in savanna areas. No dedicated hides. |
| **Annoyances** |  | Some moderate altitude accommodation. Large temperature variances & some rain can be expected. |

## *Financial Arrangements and Important Notes*

Tour dates, prices, single supplement, approximate flight costs and tour spaces are displayed on our website.

Tour inclusions:

- All meals from dinner on day 1 to lunch on day 14;
- Bottled drinking water;
- All lodgings;
- All ground transportation during the tour;
- All reserve & site entrance fees;
- All guiding services
- Tips for local guides, drivers and services.

Tour exclusions:

- Visa fees;
- ANY flights;
- Optional Gorilla tracking permit;
- Optional Chimpanzee tracking permit;
- Any beverages (including mini-bar charges at hotels);
- Optional excursions;
- Special gratuities;
- Telephone calls, laundry, and other items of a personal nature.

**Single Supplement**: The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

**Tipping**: As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, restaurants etc.) are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leader/s. If you feel that they have given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them at your discretion.

- **Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing. The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates.**
- **Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registrations, a small group supplement will be offered to confirm the tour.**
- **Tour prices are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.**
- **The designated tour leader/s may be changed at short due to unforeseen circumstances.**
- **The itinerary is indicative only. Changes may need to be made to the order in which the tour is conducted, or some of the venues we visit closer to departure. We will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.**

Our Relaxed series of tours are designed to focus on having an enjoyable holiday with a bird and wildlife focus. Where possible; we have reduced or removed long drives, single night stays and poor/rustic accommodation. We have also sought to reduce or remove difficult hikes, narrow/muddy trails and otherwise oppressive environmental conditions. Early starts and night birding are mostly optional, and we will not spend much time searching for difficult and/or skulking species. These tours are not suitable for hardcore birders and listers, or dedicated photographers.

- Although Uganda is an equatorial nation, much of the country is situated on a plateau at roughly 1000 metres above sea level, and therefore, the climate is relatively mild. In some areas (e.g. Lake Mburo National Park) it can be hot to very hot (> 30°C).
- Although this Uganda tour does not require a high level of fitness, participants should be in good general health as much of the forest birding will be done on foot and may require walking or standing for several hours at a time. Should you have any physical limitations, please notify us in advance of departure.
- There will be a few lengthy drives.
- The optional gorilla trek at Bwindi Impenetrable Forest generally involves several hours of moderate to strenuous walking on steep slopes, often off-trail. The chance of finding the gorillas is very high but not guaranteed. New regulations have meant that family group permits will be allocated on the morning of the trek. It is also possible that we well be split up into a few different trekking parties.
- The vehicles used are comfortable stretched Landcruiser 4X4's with open roof-hatches.

## *Arrival and Departure Details*

The tour starts in Entebbe on day 1 with a group arrival dinner, you are free to arrive at any time. The tour will conclude in the afternoon of day 14 at Entebbe International Airport.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your Tour Confirmation package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

Entebbe International Airport, Entebbe (IATA: EBB) is the main port of entry and departure for international flights for this tour and is well serviced by most of the world's major airlines.

Visa requirements differ by country, nationality of the traveller and duration and purpose of your intended stay. It may be necessary to obtain a visa or an electronic travel authorization in advance of your travel. It is therefore vitally important that you check with your travel agent/consulate/embassy for exact visa requirements.

**DO NOT book any flights until the Rockjumper Team have officially confirmed the tour.**