

A low-angle shot looking up into a dense tropical forest. The scene is filled with large, moss-covered tree trunks and thick, green foliage. Sunlight filters through the canopy, creating a misty, ethereal atmosphere. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

# GORRILLA TREKKING IN AFRICA

---

ECO LUXURY AND CONSERVATION  
PRESERVING SUSTAINABLE WILDLIFE  
COMMUNITIES IN AFRICA'S  
ENDANGERED WILDERNESS

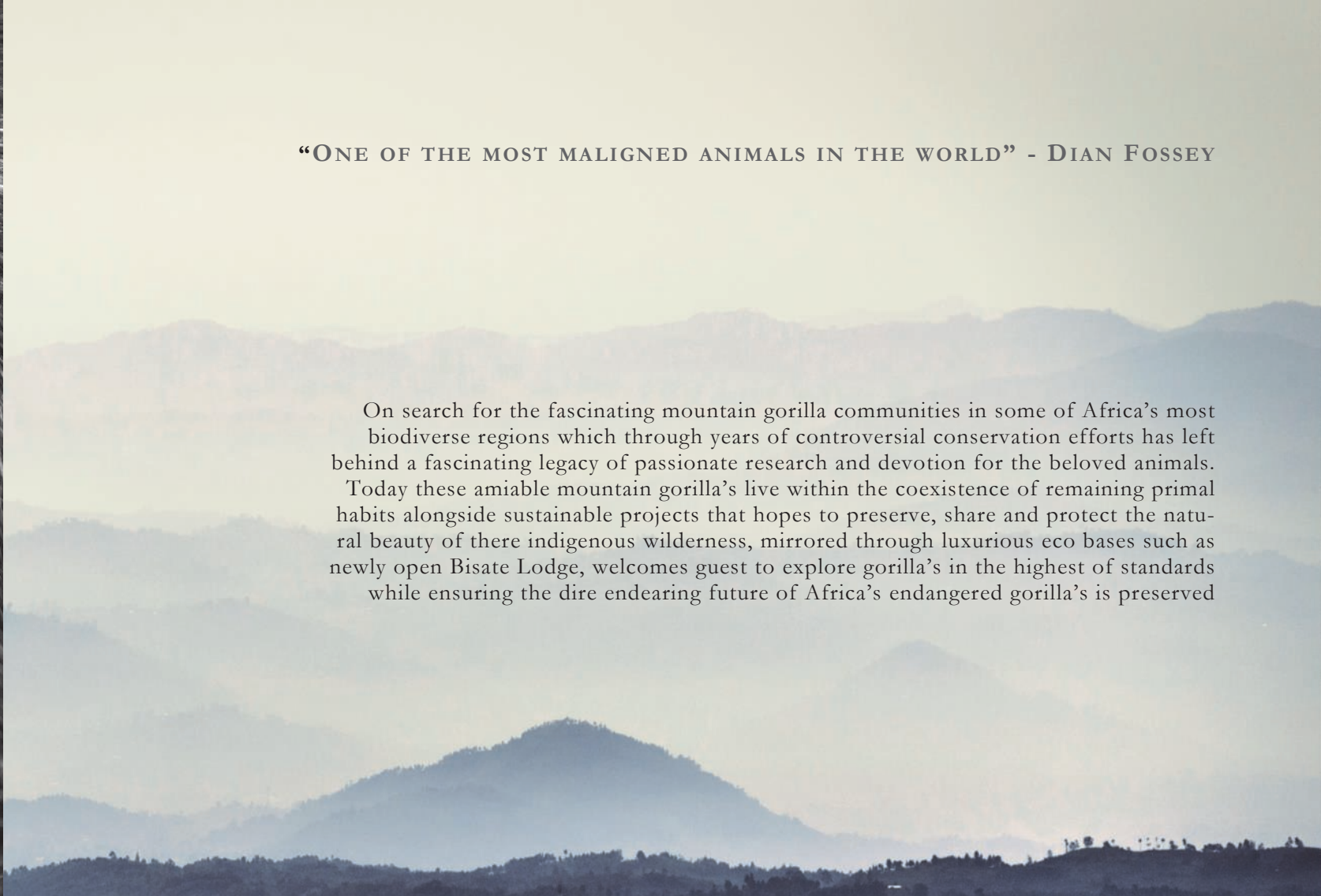




**“ONE OF THE MOST MALIGNED ANIMALS IN THE WORLD” - DIAN FOSSEY**

On search for the fascinating mountain gorilla communities in some of Africa's most biodiverse regions which through years of controversial conservation efforts has left behind a fascinating legacy of passionate research and devotion for the beloved animals.

Today these amiable mountain gorilla's live within the coexistence of remaining primal habits alongside sustainable projects that hopes to preserve, share and protect the natural beauty of there indigenous wilderness, mirrored through luxurious eco bases such as newly open Bisate Lodge, welcomes guest to explore gorilla's in the highest of standards while ensuring the dire endearing future of Africa's endangered gorilla's is preserved



Critically endangered thanks to the most dangerous species in the world, humans. Getting up close to these beautiful creatures in what remains of there natural habits, is truly special. Mountain Gorillas are the largest and rarest of the three subspecies of gorillas. Tracking some of the 880 remaining Mountain Gorillas in Rwanda, Uganda and the Republic of Congo (Western Lowland Gorillas), through the forested slopes of Africa in the Virunga volcanoes is without doubt one of the absolute highlights of African travel, if not global travel. Coming face to face with these amiable primates is overwhelming as adrenalin races through your body and a smile permeates across your face and tears well in your eyes.

Africa travel specialists Encompass Africa's share their advice on gorilla trekking in Rwanda's thousand hills of volcanic terrain, montane forests, lakes and dense wood-plains. Guiding us through unknown territory to discover and help plan all there is to gorilla trekking. From years of experience traversing on multiple trekking expeditions, primal encounters and first hand interactions, an insightful look behind one of Africa's most immersive wildlife experience unfolds...

---

#### WHAT DOES GORILLA TREKKING ENTAIL?

All treks are accompanied by experienced local guides and highly skilled rangers. You cannot help but marvel at the magnificence of these creatures. The guides are interpreting and following signs on the forest floor and vocalisations to locate the gorillas.

Fearsome in appearance yet remarkably peaceful creatures, almost everybody that visits the gorillas experiences the most spine-tingling wildlife experience imaginable. Looking into the soft brown eyes of these gentle giants is life changing. In order to conserve the natural habitat and environment of the gorillas, visitors are closely monitored and only a limited number of permits are available on each gorilla safari. In order to avoid disappointment, it is advisable to book early.

Gorilla trekking as an activity requiring a decent level of fitness or acceptance of strenuous activity for a few hours – all worth it. Keep in mind it may take hours to get to the gorilla troupe you've been allocated to visit and you have just 60 minutes with them. The reason for this is to prevent transmission of diseases – humans to gorillas. Mountain gorillas can die from the common cold or flu so it is important to control the time spent together.

You will be up early, have breakfast at your accommodation and then transfer with your private driver/guide to the Headquarters of the National Park. Here, you meet the guides and trackers and are allocated your gorilla troupe. There are just 8 people per gorilla troupe so it is a very sought-after experience

with limited permits each day. What is important is clarifying your level of fitness to your private guide because he can then try to negotiate you into the gorilla troupe located closest to the entry point, reducing the time spent hiking up through thick rainforest

Porters are available to carry your small backpack and for around US\$5 you are providing a decent income for a local plus alleviating the risk of dropping your own bag. Plus when you are close to the gorillas, you leave your bag behind with your porter and take just your camera with you.

When you are together with the gorillas, it is absolutely essential you do as the guides instruct because the risk of injury is significant should the Male silverback (or any of the gorilla troupe) take offence to your behaviour or body language. Once the hour is up, you head back down the mountain, usually buzzing on the adrenalin of the experience and close encounters with mountain gorillas.

#### WHEN IS THE BEST TIME TO VISIT AFRICA TO GO TREKKING IN SEARCH OF MOUNTAIN GORILLAS?

There is a short dry and long dry season and they are generally regarded as the better trekking months purely from a comfort perspective. The short dry season runs from mid December to early to mid February. The longer dry season runs late June/ July to September having said that, you can trek all year round, 365 days.

\*The Republic of Congo closes in April and May due to rains.

#### GORILLA TREKKING TIPS:

- Book well in advance to secure your permit. Keep in mind permits are limited each day and cannot be 'held'. It is best to ensure you have all arrangements for your Uganda or Rwanda safari holiday in place before you book a permit because accommodation options are limited.
- In terms of what to take, we always recommend wearing gardening gloves because as you walk into the forest, you sometimes have to grab hold of vines and trees for balance and they can be covered with thorns and moss and thus slippery or a little painful! You don't really need professional hiking boots plus they are heavy so chew up your luggage allowance. The shoes are likely to get very dirty however staff back at your accommodation usually organise to wash them for you.
- Take water and snacks just in case your trek takes hours before finding the gorillas.
- Camera of course is essential and a waterproof bag because you are in the high mountains and rainfall is common throughout the year.
- Also take a sweat band or neck scarf that can be used because if you have a long hike, you'll certainly pick up a sweat!







**The Mountain Gorillas are currently still under a huge threat of becoming endangered although a slight rise in their population. As a conservationist what is being done to protect these animals, and is there still hope of them living in their natural environments for many years to come with? How can one get involved?**

Absolutely there is hope because so many people, organisations and companies are focused on doing everything humanly possible to protect the gorillas and their precious habitats. We just have to reach out to the globally caring guests who want to visit wilderness wonderlands and make a difference.

It is important to remember that it was us humans who have caused the destruction of the gorilla habitat and population. Poaching, civil war and deforestation are the primary causes. Back in 1991, the International Gorilla Conservation Programme (IGCP) was set up to try to conserve the habitat in the mountain forests of the Virunga Massif in Rwanda, Uganda and Congo.  
<http://igcp.org>

It was set up on the premise that partners together are stronger and more able to influence change. The coalition continues to this day with the philosophy that earth's survival is dependent on humanity's ability to maintain a healthy and well balanced environment that includes all species of wildlife.

As an individual, your visit alone makes a contribution to the cause as the permit price covers costs associated with the national park that protects the gorillas. Whilst in the country, make sure you also visit other attractions because each one supports the local communities and their economy. Make sure you buy locally made souvenirs too so you are supporting small scale enterprise and local entrepreneurs making a living to support their families.

If you want to do more and we hope you do, become a member or supporter of one of IGCP's coalition members.

Another worthy organisation is the Gorilla Doctors and their commitment is saving one gorilla at a time. They work with wild mountain and eastern lowland gorillas.  
<http://www.gorilladoctors.org>

Where you stay whilst gorilla trekking is also important because each one is set up to support local communities and many have significant gorilla protection projects, with a portion of your stay going to saving lives of these creatures.

In the Republic of Congo, your visit is helping to develop a new business sector for the country and diversify the economy away from petrochemicals.

Of course WWF also facilitate significant effort and funds to support the local people, curb the bushmeat trade and saving the forests. Visit their website and read about their extensive efforts.

<https://www.worldwildlife.org/species/mountain-gorilla>

**Which are some of the best regions to go Gorilla trekking at the moment?**

The price for a Rwandan mountain gorilla trekking permit has gone up significantly from US\$500 to \$750 and now \$1500.

If you make a choice on permit price alone, then Uganda is a better option or even Odzala in the Republic of Congo. Having said that, more factors come into play when you make a decision. Rwanda's park is really close to Kigali and decent accommodation so whilst you pay more for the permit, your travel costs are lower than in Uganda and Congo. Uganda's Bwindi is ten hours by road or a light aircraft flight that takes 2 hours and quite costly. The Republic of Congo right now where it's safe to trek offers a 7 night package so a longer stay compared to Rwanda which is possible in just 2 nights. It's a brilliant adventure for the maverick travellers.

**Mountain gorillas and human interactions imposes a health hazard risk and the experience is therefore designed specifically to limit behavioural impact and potential disease transmission from humans to gorillas**

#### SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

- Do not make eye contact directly with the Silverback as it can be seen as a direct threat
- If young ones approach you, it's important to not reach out and make any physical contact
- If you are really sick, don't trek because you are risking your own health and that of the gorillas
- Minimum age for gorilla trekking is 15 years in the 3 countries. This is for safety but also for possible disease transmission with children under this age more prone to infection
- Maximum proximity to gorillas is usually 7 metres. The gorillas do try to get close so it's important to listen to your guide and do as they instruct during the visit.
- No food to be consumed when close to the gorillas
- Smoking is not permitted in the national parks
- There are guidelines issued by the IUCN for great ape viewing that all parks adhere to



## Where to stay?

You want to stay somewhere that's conveniently located so you are able to track the next day without having to get up ridiculously early. There are a number of properties around Volcanoes National Park in Rwanda and they vary in levels of luxury. Sabyinyo Silverback Lodge, Virunga Safari Lodge and the most recently opened, Bisate Lodge are our most popular. In Uganda there are several options in different areas. Clouds Mountain Gorilla Lodge in Nshongi has a strong partnership foundation with the community and Africa Wildlife Foundation and International Gorilla Conservation Project. In the Republic of Congo, Odzala is the reserve you visit, moving between three fantastic camps, gorilla trekking for 2 of the 8 days. Keep in mind this is for the adventure lovers, being among a handful of people who get to experience a unique, remote and undeveloped rainforest wilderness.

Think about what else you want to do in Africa and combine it for a truly contrasting safari experience. Gorilla trekking only requires a few days. Combining beautifully with Kenya and Tanzania as there are decent flight schedules leaving much room for exploring neighbouring countries. Work with a preferred Africa specialist who only promotes and works in Africa. They will have extensive first-hand experience and solid partnerships with the properties on the ground. Remember we always encourage people to be aware on the side of caution if they are considering local operators and booking directly.

*As amiable as Gorillas are, many people have spent their lifetime and may have lost their lives to the conservation and preservation of the gorilla's homelands. There is the opportunity here for you to be a guest in their environment. These days it is a peaceful exploration and one that leaves a lasting impression and makes a difference to protecting the endangered mountain gorilla.*

### About Encompass Africa:

Encompass Africa is at the intersection of traditional travel and modern journeys, where anything is possible. Mix that with unparalleled expertise in Africa, a decent dose of creativity and a ton of passion and you have Encompass Africa. This company is all about designing bespoke journeys to Africa for their guests. In addition, Encompass Africa contributes to efforts that are specifically launched and designed to save critically endangered species, protect local wilderness habitats and help communities become sustainable.

[www.encompassafrica.com.au](http://www.encompassafrica.com.au)

