



A guide to:

The Great Gorilla Project



The Great Gorilla Project

Focus: Gorillas
Location: Uganda

Start Date: Variable (Please Enquire)
Arrival & Starting Point: Rwanda

This award-winning gorilla conservation project began in 2011 with hopes of providing a sustainable future for Ugandan mountain gorillas. To do this, the project involves helping teach local communities and older generations alternative ways of generating income that protect gorilla habitats. This project also works with a number of schools and helps teach the children the importance of wildlife conservation, which in turn will inspire the future generations to come. Volunteers on this project will actively contribute to community development projects that are sustainable for the surrounding environment, and will help locals of all ages to become efficient custodians of their local ecosystem.

Throughout this project, you will work closely with the Mgahinga Community Development Organisation. Volunteers will be aiding the community projects run by this charity by working with school children and locals, teaching them about vital gorilla conservation through workshops, documentaries, agricultural practices, and even by taking them out directly into the field to learn about their environment and how to protect it! You will also work with the Kisoro Demonstration School, which is the only school for children with disabilities in the area.

During the project you will take part in two gorilla treks in the phenomenal Bwindi Impenetrable National Park and the Mgahinga Gorilla National Park. If two national parks weren't enough, you'll also take a trip to Kalinzu Forest Reserve, where you will partake in a Chimpanzee Habituation Experience to witness one of our closest living relatives in their natural habitat, and you'll embark on an incredible game drive in Lake Mburo National Park, where you're in for a chance of spotting classic African game animals. To round off your stay, you'll board a 2-hour boat ride in search of crocodiles and pods of hippos!

Volunteers play a vital role in this project, from their monetary contributions that enable the project to continue its hard work, to educating the local communities on how to best care for the stunning wildlife and landscapes which reside on their doorstep. You cannot witness endangered mountain gorillas in their natural environment in a more responsible way than this!





Gorilla Treks

You will take part in two exciting gorilla treks in the stunning Bwindi Impenetrable National Park and the Mgahinga Gorilla National Park. This is a truly unique opportunity to witness and understand the social structures and behavioural patterns of two different gorilla families. The treks can last anywhere from 45 minutes to several hours, and once found, you'll spend an hour with each family and come to learn that no two gorilla families are the same! Led by local guides, you'll have the chance to learn all about Ugandan life and the local history, so this really is a fascinating and educational experience.

Chimpanzee Habituation Experience

Embark on a unique adventure in Kalinzu Forest, where you'll trek in search of chimpanzees. Deep beneath the treetop canopy, you'll snake your way through the verdant greenery, following the impressive calls of the chimpanzees before spending time in their company, encouraging their acclimatisation to human presence. The chimpanzee habituation process affords visitors and researchers to spend more time with the chimpanzees without disturbing them. Alongside this, your permit contribution aids rainforest preservation, benefitting local communities and wildlife by mitigating poaching and habitat loss.



Mgahinga Community Development Organisation (MCDO)

You will assist the local community with environmental based projects such as reforestation and sustainable farming and livelihood projects. You will also pay a visit to some of the remote schools in the area to teach them about the importance of gorilla conservation through fun activities like singing and dancing. Volunteers will help to teach the children how to actively implement conservation strategies for endangered mountain gorillas and other wildlife on the brink of extinction in Uganda.

Mgahinga National Park

Take a number of children from the Kisoro Demonstration School (the only school for children with disabilities in the district) on a trip to Mgahinga National Park! By participating in this project, you are helping to pay for the children's entry fee into the park which the families are otherwise unable to afford. As the majority of the children are deaf or blind, you will help the teachers to actively engage them in learning about the fascinating biodiversity that can be found in the area and why it needs protecting. The children love learning and being able to reveal to them the wonders of the Mgahinga National Park really makes for a rewarding experience.



Lake Mburo Game Drives & Boat Trip

Ready for more extraordinary wildlife encounters? You will visit Lake Mburo National Park, spending the morning on an exciting game drive! Under a sky full of over 315 bird species, you'll happen across herds of galloping zebra, grazing buffalos, and giggling hyenas. During a night safari, you'll head out with hopes of gazing upon the elusive leopard and catching the reflective eyes of a graceful, nocturnal predator peering back at you. That's not all, as your afternoon will be spent aboard a boat cruising on Lake Mburo, observing hippo pods and Nile crocodiles as you go!

Ellen DeGeneres & Dian Fossey Museum

Enjoy a visit to the Ellen DeGeneres & Dian Fossey Museum which exists to allow the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund to continue protecting mountain gorillas, accelerate scientific research, and train the next generation of conservationists. From the campus architecture to purpose-built gardens and the visitor experience, this museum is a great example of responsible conservation. The visitor experience includes two decades worth of original artifacts from Dian Fossey's time living with the gorillas and the chance to immerse yourself in stunning virtual reality and 360-degree theatre experiences.



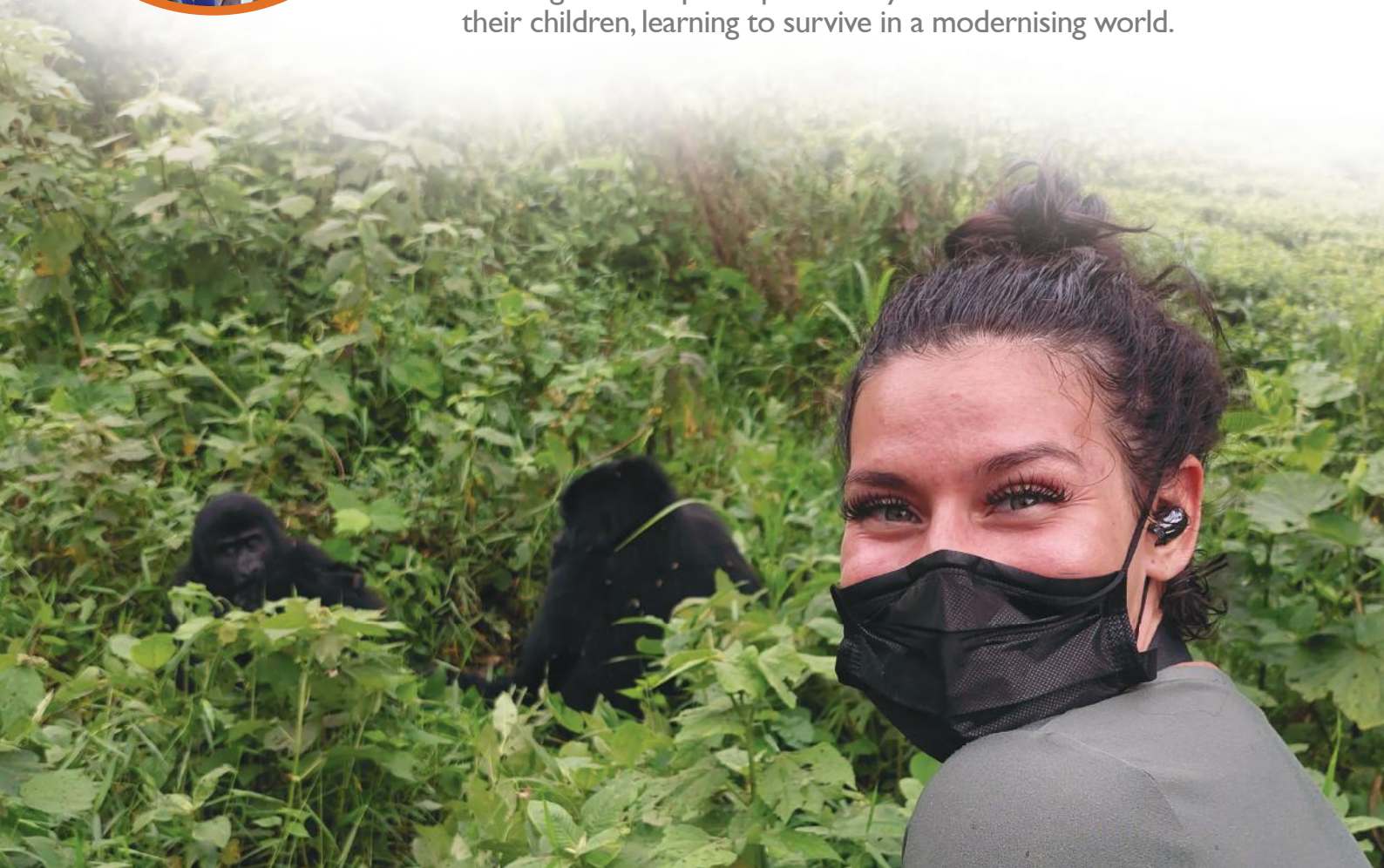
Potter's Village

You will spend a morning visiting Potter's Village - a local child crisis and medical centre in Kisoro. Located in a very poor area in southwest Uganda, they struggle with the consequences of AIDS, malaria, and malnutrition. Sadly, sixteen women die every day in Uganda during pregnancy or childbirth which results in many babies being orphaned, and Potter's Village exists to support families and provide care to babies who would otherwise have no chance of survival. Here, you will witness first-hand the positive effect this centre has in the local area, and as the project fee includes a donation to Potter's Village, you will collect and deliver the items purchased on your behalf to see the direct impact your donation makes.



Pygmy Community Visit

An afternoon with the Pygmy Community will see you regaled with tales of the fascinating yet saddening history of their displaced tribe and the loss of their homeland. The Pygmy people have a deep connection with the forest, which they once called home, and they will showcase this connection through their unique storytelling, punctuated by the scenic view of their previous home. As indigenous hunter-gatherers, the Pygmy Community are proud to share with you traditional songs, dances, and even hunting skills. You'll have the privilege of a cultural exchange that helps keep their way of life alive and builds a future for their children, learning to survive in a modernising world.



Itinerary

Day 1

Today, you will arrive in Rwanda at Kigali International Airport. The project leader will meet you at arrivals and take you to the guest house, which is approximately 5 minutes from the airport. You will have some time to settle in and meet your fellow volunteers over a welcome dinner.

Day 2

After breakfast, you will take a 3-hour private transfer to Kisoro, stopping to visit the Dian Fossey Museum on the way. Here, you will receive a tour of the Ellen DeGeneres campus and enjoy some lunch before finishing your journey to Kisoro, crossing the Rwanda/Uganda border on the way. Upon arrival, you will have time to unwind at the accommodation.

Day 3

You'll have the opportunity to take part in some rewarding and sustainable projects run by the Mgahinga Community Development Organisation. With the aim of providing the local community with better lives, you'll spend your time teaching school children or helping with small building, agricultural or reforestation projects.

Day 4

Today promises hands-on fun volunteering with children with disabilities at the Kisoro Demonstration School. Activities range from playful games and conservation lessons to classroom renovations. After, join a local family project for a coffee adventure, learning the arabica process and of course, enjoying a cup yourself!

Day 5

Following breakfast, you'll visit Potter's Village, a local child crisis and medical centre, witnessing their compassionate care for abandoned, orphaned, and sick children. Later, you'll explore the history and culture of a local Pygmy community, learning the art of traditional dancing, singing and hunting techniques!

Day 6

It's time for you to join your first gorilla trek in Mgahinga Gorilla National Park. This trek will be led by park guides who will impart their knowledge and wisdom about endangered mountain gorillas and the particular family you are visiting. Watching these great apes interact with each other is an unforgettable, heart-warming experience!

Day 7

Your group will transfer to Lake Mburo National Park today, stopping for lunch on the way. The drive will provide the opportunity to witness and appreciate the varying landscapes of Uganda and its remarkably diverse wildlife.

Day 8

Spend the morning driving through the wonders of the national park on an eye-opening morning safari. You will spend the afternoon boating along the lake, spotting hippo pods and Nile crocodiles as you go! Then, embark on an evening game drive to discover what nocturnal animals have emerged from their dens.

Day 9

Transfer to Kalinzu Forest, where you'll arrive at your eco-friendly accommodation in time for lunch. The Cielo Country Inn is a quaint family hotel that also runs a number of eco-projects, benefitting the environment and local community, so this afternoon may see you trying your hand at a task such as harvesting honey!

Itinerary

Day 10

Check off another bucket list moment today as you embark on a trek to find troops of wild chimpanzees! After locating them, you will spend time with the troop as part of their habituation process. The chimpanzee call is so impressive that it can be heard from miles away, making the first sighting an unforgettable moment.

Day 11

Today, you'll transfer back to Kisoro, stopping for lunch and a short detour to admire the beauty of Lake Bunyonyi. Your evening will be free to rest and relax back at the accommodation.

Day 12

After your earlier visit in the week to the Kisoro Demonstration School, today brings the opportunity to trek through Mgahinga National Park with the children. This allows for personal interactions and offers them firsthand forest education, immersing them in the environment they're learning to protect.

Day 13

Today, you will take part in a second gorilla trek, this time in Bwindi Impenetrable National Park. This is an opportunity to see another family of endangered gorillas, offering you the chance to understand and appreciate the difference in behaviours between the two gorilla families.

Day 14

After a busy two weeks and some fond farewells, you will transfer back to Kigali International Airport, ready for your return flight home, with once-in-a-lifetime memories in tow.



Accommodation

Night 1



Kigali

On arrival, you will take a short transfer to a beautiful hotel in Kigali where you will spend your first night. Here, you will be accommodated on a same-sex basis in a spacious twin-share room that boasts views of the beautifully kept gardens (double rooms are available for couples). The onsite garden grill restaurant is very popular with locals and tourists alike, serving Rwandan barbeque specialties and other local cuisine.

Nights 2-6 & 11-13



Kisoro

For the majority of your time on the project, you will be accommodated in a guesthouse in Kisoro. The rooms here are basic, but clean and comfortable, and all have mosquito nets and an en-suite bathroom. There is also a bar/lounge area with free Wi-Fi available. All rooms are provided on a single basis, unless travelling as a couple.

Nights 7 & 8



Lake Mburo

Experience a unique stay in a safari tent that boasts a stunning view of the national park, usually complete with sightings of grazing zebras in the distance. Your shared room with en-suite, linens, and power outlets will make for a comfortable stay. In the middle of camp you'll find the restaurant and bar where one night you may be able to savour potjiekos, a Southern African stew!

Nights 9 & 10

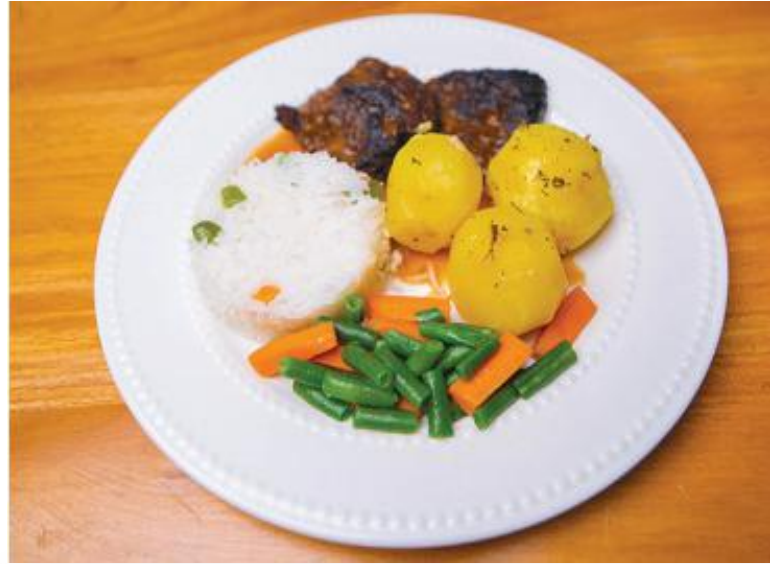


Kalinzu Forest

While exploring Kalinzu Forest, you will stay at a sustainable, family-run hotel. You'll be accommodated in a twin-share room (unless travelling as a couple) with large bathrooms, Wi-Fi and TVs. Elsewhere on the hotel grounds, you'll find many eco-projects that benefit the local community. You'll lend a hand one afternoon, potentially learning to harvest honey!

Food & Drink

Whilst on the project you will have three meals provided for you each day and will have a full menu to choose from! Food will be a mixture of traditional and western dishes, so you will be sure to find something you like for every meal. Beverages (including alcoholic) are available at all locations but are not included in the price of the project, although water and a packed lunch are provided during your gorilla treks.

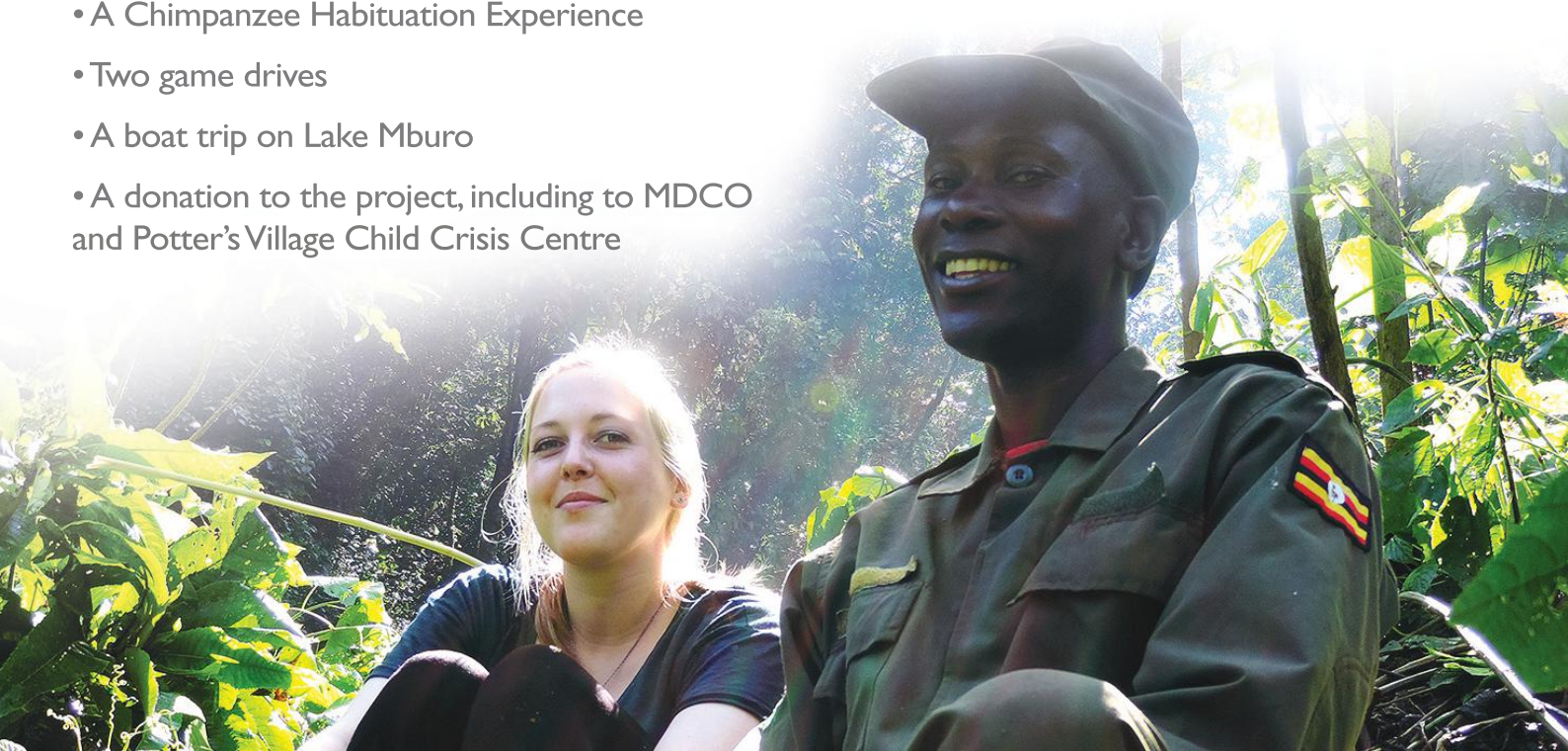


What's Included

- Accommodation
- All meals mentioned in the itinerary
- Transport (including airport transport)
- English-speaking project coordinator
- Two gorilla treks
- A Chimpanzee Habituation Experience
- Two game drives
- A boat trip on Lake Mburo
- A donation to the project, including to MDCO and Potter's Village Child Crisis Centre

Not Included

- Flights
- Vaccinations
- Visas
- Travel insurance
- Soft or alcoholic drinks and extra snacks



Volunteer Reviews

Suzanne

"Seeing the gorillas was definitely a highlight, but I have to say it is the people I met that will stay with me. Seeing the children and their smiling faces will stick with me for a long time."



Angela

"The moment I first saw a silverback sitting with his 6-month-old was the most amazing feeling and a pleasure to experience."



Khristine

"This project brought me more joy and happiness than I could have ever imagine. Walking into the orphanage and realising it wasn't just the gorillas I'd come to help and protect is something I'll never forget."



What Next?

Becoming a volunteer on The Great Gorilla Project is simple, and you can help make a difference to gorilla conservation efforts in just a few simple steps...



Visit the website to select your start date and how long you would like to volunteer for.



Secure your place online by paying a deposit of £195. You'll have up to 60 days before your start date to pay your remaining balance.



Prepare for your trip and ask your dedicated travel expert any questions before packing your bags and heading off to Uganda!



Finally, have an incredible time and don't forget to send in or tag us in your photos!

#thegreatprojects



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