



Vegan Uganda Gorillas

February 8 – 15, 2023

COSTS & LOGISTICS DETAILS

Team Page: www.facebook.com/VeganUgandaGorillas

Organizer: mike.weinberg1952@gmail.com

COVID 19
Since we'll be sharing vehicles, rooms, and eating spaces, all teammates must be **FULLY VACCINATED.**

Vegan Uganda Gorillas is an all-vegan, carbon-offset adventure in the heart of Africa! Using vibrant and bustling Kigali, Rwanda as our home base, we'll visit the newly-built Ellen Campus of the Dian Fossey Institute, travel across the nearby Ugandan border to visit a native community, trek through rugged terrain to find and spend a precious hour with a mountain gorilla family, go on evening and morning game drives to spot lions and gazelles, take a riverboat cruise amidst crocodiles and hippos, and finally track chimpanzees in their natural habitat before returning to Kigali for our flights home.

February 2023 Itinerary

Day / Date	Activity
Wed Feb 8	Arrive at Kigali International Airport, Rwanda. Transfer to hotel. Rest, recuperate. Overnight at Hotel Chez Lando .
Thu Feb 9	Kigali City Tour , including Kigali Genocide Memorial museum. Overnight at Hotel Chez Lando.
Fri Feb 10	Ellen Campus of Dian Fossey Institute / Bwindi National Park / Batwa Community Depart hotel at 6 am, drive ~3 hr to the Ellen Campus for a VIP behind-the-scenes tour (9:30 – 11:30) followed by vegan buffet lunch. Drive ~3.5 hr to Bwindi Impenetrable National Park in Uganda, viewing spectacular mountain scenery en route. In the afternoon, take cultural walk to the Batwa native community. Overnight Gorilla Mist Camp or Bakiga Lodge .
Sat Feb 11	Mountain Gorilla Tracking in Bwindi Report to Park headquarters at 6 am with packed lunch. After briefing by the senior park ranger-guide, track the gentle giants through thick vegetation as we hike up and down slippery slopes. An hour with the gorillas is guaranteed. It is an extraordinary feeling sitting in the dense rainforest knowing one is with a few of the last remaining mountain gorillas. Overnight at Gorilla Mist Camp or Bakiga Lodge.
Sun Feb 12	Queen Elizabeth National Park / Evening Game Drive After breakfast, drive via Ishasha to the southern sector of Queen Elizabeth National Park in quest of rare tree-climbing lions and sights of antelopes like kobs, gazelles, and bush bucks among others. In the evening, go for a game drive to the Kasenyi sector in search of lions and buffalo among others. Overnight at Enganzi Lodge .
Mon Feb 13	Chimpanzee Tracking / Afternoon Boat Cruise In the morning, track chimpanzees in Kyambura Gorge or Kalinju Forest. In the afternoon, take a 2½ hour boat cruise along the Kazinga Channel connecting Lakes George and Edward, which will reward us with close range views of crocodiles, hippos, buffalo, elephants, and a variety of birds like pelicans, African skimmers, and African fish eagles. Overnight at Enganzi Lodge.
Tue Feb 14	Morning Game Drive / Transfer to Kigali Early morning, go for a game drive in the Kasenyi sector to see early-rising wildlife. Before noon, transfer back to Kigali arriving late in the evening. Overnight at Hotel Chez Lando.
Wed Feb 15	Transfer to Kigali International Airport for return or onward flight.

REQUIREMENTS

- * Vaccinated against Covid-19 / Yellow Fever (See VACCINATIONS below). Wear medical face masks when appropriate.
- * Commit to be in shape to hike on steep, slippery mountain slopes with a daypack (water, clothing layers, snacks...).
- * Bring only 100% animal-free (no leather, wool, down, silk...) gear, shoes, and clothing layers for heat, humidity, rain, cold.
- * Rugged-soled trail shoes or boots. Bug repellent and head net (recommended).
- * Guide company recommends soft bags or backpacks: www.ugandagorillasafari.com/useful-info/safari-packing-list
- * **Carry-on luggage only:** Both Vegan Antarctica & Vegan Inca Trail had teammates whose checked luggage didn't arrive until the very last minute, causing stress to themselves, the organizer, and the guide companies. In addition, all luggage must accompany us in the transport vehicles, so it's vital that everyone pack efficiently.
- * Pre-vegan spouses/companions are welcome if they agree to wear/eat exclusively vegan on our adventure.

ESTIMATED COST: \$3500 USD

- \$1900 for land transportation, lodging, most meals, gorilla permits, driver-guides
- \$1000 for roundtrip economy airfare to/from Kigali, Rwanda (cost will vary)
- \$ 600 for visas, tips, carbon offset, trip insurance, personal gear, some meals

Packing & Gear Guide
[Click](#) for carry-on tips, vegan gear links, organizational tips.

GUIDE COMPANY: Africa Tours Adventure

Of the several guide company reps I contacted, Nicholas at *Africa Tours Adventure* offered the best package by far. In fact, his prices were hundreds of dollars cheaper than the nearest competitor (some quoted nearly twice as much). Of course, price isn't the only criteria, as I seek reputable companies that pay their staff well and provide clean, comfortable (although not luxury) accommodations. So it was reassuring to learn that besides being an indigenous company based in Kampala, Uganda, *Africa Tours Adventure* was highly rated with exceptionally outstanding reviews on TripAdvisor.

Reviews: www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g293841-d7171093-Reviews-Africa_Tours_Adventure-Kampala_Central_Region.html

Websites: www.ugandagorillassafari.com www.gorillatreksinrwanda.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/AfricaToursAdventure

Uganda Tour Operators member: https://ugandatouroperators.org/members/22/africa_tours_adventure_ltd

Email: info@gorillatreksinrwanda.com africatoursadventure@gmail.com

Phone: +256-782-186-562 (Uganda) +1-312-818-0158 (USA)

TOUR PRICING

Persons **Cost Per Person** (USD, double occupancy)

18 \$ 1900

For my organizing and recruiting efforts, I neither seek nor receive any personal discount, perk, or compensation. If I'm offered a free trip or incentive, I divide it by the number of participants so we can all share in the savings. My goal is to have compatible travel companies and companions while demonstrating that a vegan lifestyle can be fun and adventurous. *Mike Weinberg, San Diego, California*

Cost includes:

- * Airport-hotel transfers
- * 3 nights lodging in Kigali (2 before / 1 after expedition)—includes breakfast buffet with vegan options
- * 4 nights lodging during expedition—includes vegan breakfasts, lunches, and dinners
- * 100% vegan meals—no meat, fish, egg, dairy, honey, or other animal products
- * 100% synthetic bedding—no feathers, wool, silk, or other animal products
- * Kigali City Tour—day before expedition
- * Ellen Campus VIP behind-the-scenes tour (\$800 for group covered by donations. See FUNDRAISER below.)
- * Ellen Campus vegan buffet lunch (\$15 per teammate—covers treating 3 driver-guides to lunch)
- * Land/road excursions—three vehicles (6 teammates per vehicle) each with a driver-guide
- * 3 full-time, English-speaking driver-guides
- * Gorilla Tracking permit (USD \$700)—two trekking groups (9 teammates per group) each with a gorilla ranger
- * Trekking poles (if desired)
- * Chimp Tracking permit
- * Riverboat cruise
- * Government taxes
- * All other activities as indicated in the itinerary

Cost does not include:

- * Airfare
- * East Africa Tourist Visa (\$100—see VISA REQUIREMENTS below)
- * Tips for driver-guides and gorilla guides (\$40 per teammate—See TIPS below)
- * Lunches & dinners in Kigali (at hotel or nearby vegetarian eatery)
- * Required: Medical masks to wear during gorilla encounters
- * Optional: Personal porter to carry gear on treks (\$20/day)

PAYMENT TERMS

- * **Booking Deposit:** \$100 to reserve your spot (*nonrefundable*)
- * **September 1, 2022:** \$700 to secure gorilla permit
- * **December 1, 2022:** \$1100 Balance Due

Payments to be made by credit card
(add 4% fee) or wire transfer.

Cancellation Schedule

www.gorillatreksinrwanda.com/about-us/terms-conditions.html

All cancellation requests must be made in writing and shall be effective on the date of actual receipt by Africa Tours Adventure.

- * 60 days or more prior to arrival 10% charge
- * 59 – 32 days prior to arrival 25% charge
- * 31 – 8 days prior to arrival 50% charge
- * 7 – 3 days prior to arrival 75% charge
- * 48 hours to arrival 100% charge

* Gorilla permit refunds are subject to Uganda Wildlife Authority terms. See GORILLA PERMITS below.

TIPS

Bring assorted \$20 / \$10 / \$5 / \$1 (USD) bills for tips.

Tipping is not mandatory, especially if service is poor, but with Africa Tour Adventures' sterling reputation, I have no doubt we'll be extremely pleased with their performance. Nicholas recommends the following tip amounts for key personnel:

* Driver-Guide: \$20/person for the entire expedition.

* Gorilla Ranger: \$20/person for each ranger (usually 2).

Also consider tips/gifts for your airport-hotel driver, hotel & lodge staff, animal trackers, trek assistants, native communities, etc.

On past trips, I've arranged for prepaid tips or collected recommended amounts to present as a group to recipients with words of gratitude.

I've come to learn that tipping is a personal activity. Some people prefer not to tip, others prefer not to disclose how much or little they tip.

So going forward, I'm posting recommended amounts and leaving it up to each person to tip privately according to their preferences.

EAST AFRICAN TOURIST VISA

Bring \$100 (USD) cash.

Most countries in Africa require a visa for foreign travelers. Since we'll be shuttling from Rwanda to Uganda and back, the best option is to purchase an East African Tourist Visa, a multiple-entry visa that covers Rwanda, Uganda, and Kenya. An online application for Rwanda, the first country we'll visit, is available, but the website often has problems, so Nicholas recommends purchasing the visa upon arrival at the Kigali airport, a process that he says is seamless. We did this when arriving at the Kilimanjaro airport in Tanzania in 2018 for Vegan Kilimanjaro, and it was quick and easy even with a fairly large crowd.

FLIGHT/TRIP INSURANCE

For flights, I generally purchase the insurance option offered by the travel website or airline. For everything else, I purchase trip insurance, especially for medical evacuation, which can cost tens of thousands of dollars. Depending on the terms, trip insurance typically covers all non-reimbursed expenses incurred for a covered reason. For some insurance companies, you must apply soon after booking a trip to avoid denial of coverage, as they fear you'll try to apply for coverage only after getting sick, etc. That doesn't seem to be an issue with *World Nomads* "Standard" Plan, which will cover Rwanda/Uganda for persons under 70 years-old for less than \$100: www.worldnomads.com. For "Silver Nomads" 70 or over, they now offer www.worldnomads.com/usa/travel-insurance/silver-nomads in a partnership with TripAssure for about 10% of your total declared trip cost (which you could limit to your nonflight expenses providing you purchased flight insurance separately). Another option is AIG Travel Guard www.travelguard.com, which offers 3 tiers of insurance and factors in your age.

CARBON OFFSET

Plant-based diets have dramatically-lower carbon footprints than animal-based diets, but teammates will also offset their travel emissions via www.cooleffect.org/content/travel-offset. A round-trip international flight lasting 13 or more hours each way can be offset with a contribution of about \$60 (USD) although teammates are encouraged to submit more to cover safari transportation as well as fund several worthy projects like tree plantings, grassland & forest preservation, wind turbines, economical cookstoves, or a bird sanctuary. Over 90% of every dollar donated to Cool Effect goes directly to the projects.



FUNDRAISER FOR DIAN FOSSEY GORILLA FUND

This is the largest and longest-running organization fully dedicated to gorilla conservation, and we'll have the privilege of taking a VIP behind-the-scenes tour of its newly-built Ellen Campus in appreciation for a minimum \$800 group donation (which has already been covered), including a delicious vegan lunch for the team and our driver guides.

Click on [Donate](#) to go to the Vegan Uganda Gorillas portal and please be generous. This tour is costing us about \$200/day compared to luxury tours that can cost \$1000/day. Afterwards, consider clicking on [Adopt](#) to adopt a gorilla for yourself or a loved one, especially a child who would delight in following the life of their adoptee.



For an overview of the history and construction of the Campus, and a progress report on the latest in gorilla conservation and research, view this informative December 2022 webinar: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VuUsJOWDZnc>

For those who haven't seen *Gorillas in the Mist* (a 1988 movie starring Sigourney Weaver), Dian Fossey devoted her life to studying gorillas. Tragically, she was murdered at age 53, most likely by poachers who resented her interference.

Movie: www.amazon.com/Gorillas-Mist-Sigourney-Weaver/dp/B00AVRO1Q6

Bio: <https://gorillafund.org/who-we-are/dian-fossey/dian-fossey-bio>

Well-meaning observers may question the ethics of groups of humans, especially vegans, "disturbing" animals in their natural habitat. I'm sensitive to this criticism but would counter that mountain gorillas might be extinct were it not for the inflow of eco-tourism funds that protect them from habitat destruction, encroachment, and poaching. In fact, although still endangered, the gorilla population is growing: www.worldatlas.com/articles/is-the-mountain-gorilla-population-actually-growing.html

VACCINATIONS / TESTING REQUIREMENTS

Covid-19 (The following links come from the respective U.S. embassies. If not from the U.S., check with your embassy.)

* Rwanda **Oct 2022**: No vax/test requirements. Health screening. <https://rw.usembassy.gov/health-alert-covid-19-information>

* Uganda **Dec 2022**: Proof of full vaccination inbound/outbound. <https://ug.usembassy.gov/covid-19-information-page>

Yellow Fever (The following CDC links also list other recommended vaccines and medicines.)

* Rwanda: Vaccination certificate *not* required if coming from non-endemic countries.

<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/rwanda>

* Uganda: Vaccination certificate required for arriving travelers from all countries.

<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/uganda>

Check with your health care provider. Prior to international trips, I contact Kaiser's Travel Advisory department for recommended vaccinations even if not required by the countries I'm visiting.

WHY UGANDA GORILLAS FROM RWANDA?

Mountain gorillas can be visited in three countries with widely varying permit costs: Congo (\$400), Uganda (\$700), and Rwanda (\$1500). The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) permit is cheapest, but rebel groups roam the countryside. Rwanda gorillas are the easiest to get to, but the permit cost is steep. So, Uganda seemed like the safest middle ground. Transit-wise, it's about an 8-hour drive from Kampala, Uganda to the gorillas in Bwindi Impenetrable National Park. But it's only about a 4-hour drive from Kigali, Rwanda, so I chose Kigali as our home base.

GORILLA PERMITS

A standard \$700 Ugandan gorilla permit (included in our fees) entitles us to hike all day if needed, but we're limited to just 1 hour with the gorillas, and each gorilla family is limited to one visiting group per day. Max human group size is limited, so we'll be split into 2 trekking groups of 9 each. Trackers with radios will find human-habituated gorilla families early in the morning then guide us to them as they move about, so the likelihood of an encounter is good. We will visit the Ruhija sector, whose gorilla families include Mukiza, Oruzogo, Bitukura and Kyaguliro. In Nicholas' 14 years in the business, not once have his groups failed to encounter gorillas. But if we don't, it may be possible to get a partial rebate of the permit fee or be allowed to try again the next day. For more info, visit: www.ugandagorillassafari.com/useful-info/book-a-gorilla-permit



MEDICAL MASKS / ILLNESS

Tourists pose risks for disease transmission: www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2020/02/200213175912.htm. And with covid, the risks have multiplied. Each teammate will bring and wear medical face masks when required or appropriate and in the presence of other primates to prevent the spread of respiratory infections, to which our close cousins are very susceptible.

- If a park ranger determines someone is actually sick, they won't be allowed to go on the trek but may qualify for a partial refund of the gorilla permit. Technically, we're supposed to stay 21 feet (7 meters) away, but baby gorillas have been known to crawl up into people's laps in search of food or water or out of curiosity, which would make me worry about the daddy Silverback, who can be 9 times stronger than the average man! But apparently, habituated adult gorillas are tolerant of close contact if one makes no moves towards the baby.

This is a bit creepy, but here's a "selfish" reason to wear a mask when we track gorillas and chimps.

The Disturbing Reason You Should Wear a Mask While Chimpanzee Trekking

A new species of tick has been discovered in Uganda...and they live inside primates' nostrils.

<https://www.cntraveler.com/stories/2013-10-10/chimpanzee-trekking-safari-health-tip-ticks-uganda/amp>

PUBLICITY

To promote veganism, I may seek publicity for this all-vegan expedition.

Teammates names and volunteered comments may appear in news releases I send to various publications.

TEAM TABLE

To promote camaraderie and to be able to recognize one another when we meet in Kigali, each team member's headshot photo, city, state or country, age, and years of veganism (as of Feb 2023) will appear in a Team Table. A non-vegan spouse or companion who agrees to eat exclusively vegan and bring and wear only 100% animal-free gear will be listed as Pre-vegan.

Vegan Uganda Gorillas Expedition Team					
February 8-15, 2023					
 Mike Weisberg San Diego California Age 70 26-year vegan	 Dana Holland Santa Fe New Mexico Age 67 12-year vegan	 Patrick Davis Lakeside California Age 42 Pre-vegan	 Rob Spain San Jose California Age 60 8-year vegan	 Rupesh Shah Chicago Illinois Age 39 7-year vegan	 Leland Hope Hillsboro Oregon Age 44 7-year vegan
 Sherry Bowman Burlington Canada Age 50 23-year vegan	 Alec Lett Burlington Canada Age 60 Pre-vegan	 Mandy Kurbani Fayette Virginia Age 30 23-year vegan	 David Kwiatkowski Fayette Virginia Age 30 10-year vegan	 Carrie Bell Cardiff-by-the-Sea California Age 52 Pre-vegan	 Burt Gatta Oceanside California Age 60 26-year vegan
 Lisel West Arlington Virginia Age 58 30-year vegan	 Kerlin Wilson Seattle Washington Age 52 15-year vegan	 James Barnett Fort Collins Colorado Age 34 9-year vegan	 April Nebelke Fort Collins Colorado Age 36 7-year vegan	 Terje Dena Portland Oregon Age 52 13-year vegan	 Viviane Stevens Dallas Texas Age 51 15-year vegan

VEG EATERIES

www.happycow.net/searchmap?s=3&location=Kigali%2C+Rwanda&filters=vegan-vegetarian

Currently, per Happycow.net, there are a few vegetarian but no 100% vegan eateries in Kigali. As part of our expedition package, Hotel Chez Lando will provide a breakfast buffet with vegan options each morning of our stay. They can also do vegan lunches and dinners on request. Afia Organics, a vegetarian eatery, is about a 10-minute walk away.



V-CARDS

To ensure cruelty-free meals and food while traveling, I created V-Cards in over 100 languages. V-Cards are useful in non-vegan eateries as well as in grocery stores and shops. Simply hand a card to the waiter, chef, or store clerk so they'll know what you can and can't eat. Or use them yourself to screen packaged product ingredients. The Kinyarwanda V-Cards are for Rwanda, and the Swahili V-Cards are for Uganda. (Technically, Swahili is the people, Kiswahili is the language).

If you'd like your own set of V-Cards for this trip, visit www.maxlearning.net/HEALTH/V-Cards and print the Kinyarwanda and Swahili pages then follow the instructions for cutting them into individual cards.

Kinyarwanda~

<p>I AM VEGAN Plant foods only please! NO MEAT No mammal, bird, fish, seafood, insect, sauce, broth... NO EGG No yolk, albumen, whites... NO DAIRY No milk, cream, cheese, yogurt, whey, casein, lactose... NO ANIMAL PRODUCTS No honey, gelatin, lard, oil, blood, bone, fat... [English]</p>	<p>NKORESHA IMBOGA GUSA Nibikomoka kumboga gusa! Nta nyama ndetse nibizikomokaho Nta nyamaswa z'inyamabere, inyoni, amafi, ibiryoyi byo mu nyanja, udukoko, isosi, umufa ... Nta magi, yaba ay'inkoko cyangwa ibindi Nta umuhondo, albumen, abazungu ... Nta mata nibiyakomokaho Nta mata, cream, foromaje, yogurt, whey, casein, lactose ... Nta bikomoka kumatungo, nk'inyama nibindi Nta buki, gelatine, lard, amavuta, amaraso, amagufa, ibinure ... [Kinyarwanda]</p>
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Swahili~

<p>I AM VEGAN Plant foods only please! NO MEAT No mammal, bird, fish, seafood, insect, sauce, broth... NO EGG No whites, albumen, yolk... NO DAIRY No milk, cheese, yogurt, whey, casein, lactose... NO ANIMAL PRODUCTS No honey, gelatin, lard, oil, blood, bone, fat... [English]</p>	<p>MIMI NI VEGAN Vyakula vya Mimea tafadhali! HAKUNA NYAMA Hakuna mamalia, Ndege, samaki, wadudu, vyakula vya kusindikwa, mchuzi... HAKUNA YAI Hakuna ute, uwambo, kiini... HAKUNA MAZIWA Hakuna maziwa, jibini, mtindi, samli... HAKUNA MAZAO YA WANYAMA Hakuna asali, gelatin, mafuta ya nguruwe, damu, mifupa, mafuta... [Kiswahili]</p>
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Tel Aviv store clerk checking ingredients for me.



Me shopping in a Vienna grocery store.