



UGANDA
TOURISM CATALOGUE

JOURNEY

through the pearl

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a sunset over a body of water. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm orange and yellow glow that reflects on the water's surface. A small boat is visible in the distance, and the foreground shows the dark silhouette of a boat's edge. The sky transitions from a deep blue at the top to a lighter, hazy blue near the horizon.



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An aerial photograph of a dry, cracked earth landscape. The ground is a mix of brown and tan colors, with numerous deep, irregular cracks and ridges. The overall texture is rough and uneven. Overlaid on this background is the text "Journey Through The Pearl" in a large, white, sans-serif font. The text is centered horizontally and spans most of the width of the image.

Journey Through The Pearl



From the Chairman of Uganda Tourism Board

Mr. James Tumusiime

This splendid new catalogue illustrates Uganda's exquisite and rich tourist attractions by region. The catalogue, in addition to the wildlife experiences, activities and attractions, also focuses on the wider perspective of culture, religion and Uganda's rich history to offer a diversified tourism experience.

The catalogue details the attractions in each region of Uganda divided into the north, the east, the central and the west. In designing of this catalogue, UTB focused on explaining, both in text and pictures, what a tourist can do while in a region. We strongly believe that this format will help both our visitors and the tour operators to develop itineraries.

This catalogue will be produced periodically for it to be enriched with new discoveries. We therefore wish to welcome you to our first edition of the catalogue.

We wish to appreciate the support from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) who financed data collection, design and production of this first catalogue. We also sincerely thank Real Marketing who put the catalogue together. The team at Uganda Tourism Board who has worked tirelessly to ensure a successful project is also recognized.

In creating this attractive and accessible catalogue, we hope to reach out to all tourism enthusiasts, young and old, in Uganda and beyond her borders, the business community and all stakeholders, by providing an ideal tourism catalogue for this destination Uganda: The Pearl of Africa!



From the C.E.O of Uganda Tourism Board

Mr. Stephen Asiimwe

Winston Churchill referred to Uganda as the Pearl of Africa. In his book 'My African Journey' he described Uganda's: "Magnificence, for variety of form and color, for profusion of brilliant life" and added that it is "from end to end a beautiful garden".

This catalogue, in picture and prose, aptly shows that pictures speak thousands of words. What with Uganda's people, culture, history, heritage, nature, wildlife, flora and fauna, is what Churchill and many millions of travelers have seen and are waiting to see for centuries to come.

Josephine Hart, a world renowned- Irish writer, theatrical producer and television presenter, once described scenery as beautiful as Uganda as: There is an eternal landscape, geography of the soul; we search for its outlines all our lives.

Uganda is a country sandwiched between the savannah and the equatorial forest. Over 56 tribes the country has some of the world's greatest contrasts.

Home to some the tallest and shortest people in the world, the Karimojong in the North east and the Batwa Pygmies groups in the Southwest respectively, Uganda has a wide catalogue and array of features to sample.

Uganda is among the top 20 global tourism destinations of the year 2013, according to the National Geographic. The National Geographic is an international travel channel affiliated to the National Geographic Society.

The abundant bio diversity with over 1040 bird species for all your Bird watching pleasure and all the above make it a destination you need to add on your travel list.

Uganda is poetry wrapped in beauty and adventure, too often hidden away around the corners of our minds, between the seconds of our lives. This special will chronicle the little-known but stunning and extravagant Uganda that breathes an adventure, a surprise, a miracle around every perfumed corner.

The country's night life and entertainment is unrivalled. Kampala has been named the 'Entertainment Capital of East Africa. The city that never sleeps!

The crazy Night and social life in Kampala and major towns around Uganda is a story that can only be told through experience with events all year round.

Explore and walk in the footsteps of Sam and Florence Baker, of John Hanning Speke, Ernest Hemmingway, and the early Ugandans. Witness the miracles of the green landscapes and tropical ice, the fertile valleys, and the shimmering lakes. Countries talk if the Big Five, Uganda has the five and much more. With 10 national parks and over 12 game reserves, Uganda has a vast array to chose from. This catalogue will give you a peak of what is more to see and explore.

At the Uganda Tourism Board we are committed to serving and ensuring that local, regional, Intra-African and global visitors enjoy and sample this 'Gifted By Nature' nation. Enjoy as you read one and get ready to explore!!!!

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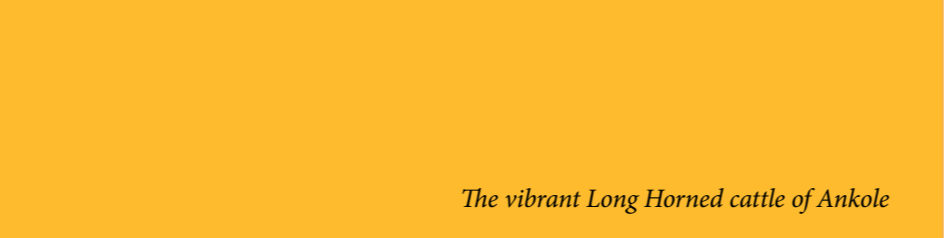
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CENTRAL UGANDA



Overview of the region

Baganda were part of the Great Bantu migration from North West of Africa.

These scattered bands of people were organized into clans. The original five clans were Ffumbe, Lugave, Nnyange, Njaza and Nnyonyi. Members of these clans will never miss a chance to remind you of this fact!

Back then however, the region was so sparsely populated it was known as 'Muwaawa' meaning, 'a place of few people'.

There were constant quarrels between clans to determine who was stronger or better than the other. That was until one clan leader by the name of 'Bemba' showed more guile to become the overall leader.

Unfortunately for Bemba, Kintu arrived from the north ahead of 13 clans and swept Bemba out of his house reputedly called 'Buganda'.

That in a nutshell is how the lines of Buganda kings (Kabakas) began 700 years ago. The present Kabaka, Ronald Muwenda Mutebi II is a cultural leader.



Central Uganda covers a large area of gentle rolling hills interspaced with wetlands and forests.

The southern parts wrap themselves around Lake Victoria almost in a loving embrace typified by some really incredible beaches.

Banana plantations once covered many slopes of these hills, because plantain bananas are the staple food of the region.

However, due to population pressures, the plantations have given way to real estate developments and all the other attributes associated with modernity.

By virtue of being chosen by the British colonialists as the administrative centre of Uganda, there are buildings that reflect that past. To be sure, not many, but a couple still carry the solid stamp of Empire.

You cannot talk about Central Uganda without mentioning the Kingdom of Buganda. The two are part and parcel of the same thing.

The whole character of this region is shaped by traditions closely related to the rule of the Kabaka (King). It is a realm that goes back about 700 years.

Absolute monarchy is no more but loyalty to the Kabaka is an underlying factor of people's lives.



Sunset Over Kampala City

Kampala City- at a glance

A first time visitor to Kampala could be forgiven for being shocked by the apparent chaos in this cradle of green.

Please do not be alarmed. It is all part of the Kampala charm.

Spread over various hills, the city offers modern amenities amidst brilliant sunshine. Accommodation varies. Budget or luxury and in between, the choice is yours.

Kampala oozes with the zest for life. This explains the notorious motorbike taxis (boda boda). Their urgency to get you to your destination is well matched by their utter disregard for traffic regulations. Wayward governing by the likes of Idi Amin and two wars took its toll.

Nevertheless, today Kampala bustles with an infectious energy. A stroll through the downtown area means music, music and more music.



Panoramic View of Kampala City

It can be jammed or quiet in some areas then immaculately pristine in others but the mix of sounds and colours convey a city that cannot easily succumb to boredom.



(Right)
Boda Boda Cyclist.

Kampala traffic jams can be frustrating, not unlike many other cities around the world. However, word of caution; if you don't have a helmet, best you ignore the boda boda.



(Right)
Taxi Park.

Although commuter taxis are relatively cheap, some conductors may think you are a millionaire in hiding.

Wherever you go, you cannot run away from a ready smile and fresh fruits.

(Right)
Nakasero Market.

We have no problem being called a "Banana Republic".

(Right)
Nakasero Market.





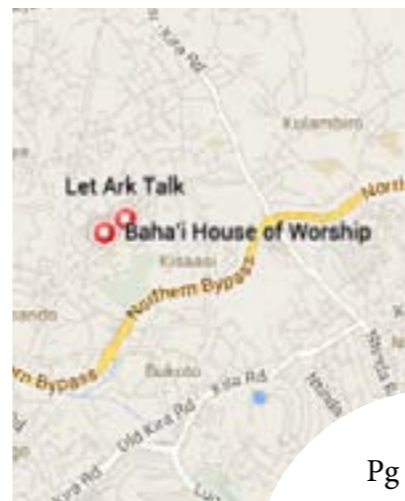
Bahai Temple at Dusk

Bahai Temple

The Bahá'í faith was introduced to Uganda at the beginning of 1958. A House of Worship was built and completed in 1961 atop Kikaya Hill on the outskirts of central Kampala. Designed by Charles Mason Ramey, the Temple with the characteristic dome is the only one of its kind in Africa. The 50-acre site includes extensive gardens that attract people from far and wide. The tranquility you find in and out of the Temple is in itself a triumph to the designer.



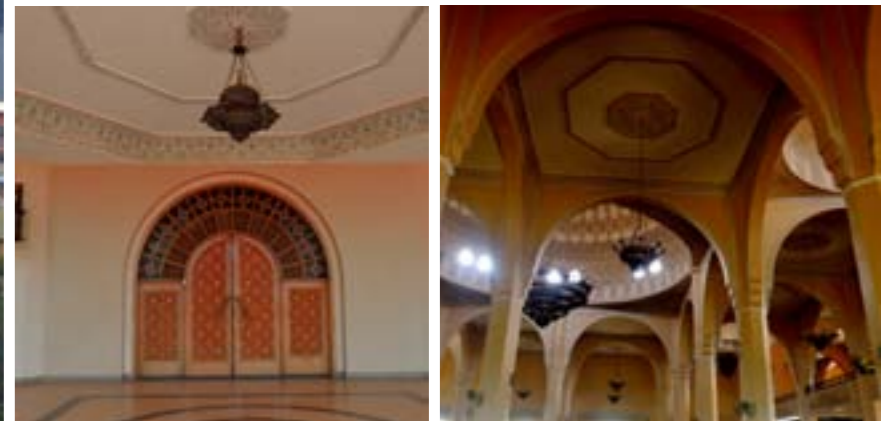
Snippets of Bahai Temple; Bahai Temple gardens at the top and the interior of the temple



Uganda National Mosque

Uganda National Mosque

Thanks to Idi Amin, Captain Lugard's Fort on Old Kampala Hill had to be dismantled and shoved aside, to build the Uganda National Mosque. Architecturally, the mosque has few rivals in this part of Africa. On sunny days, the domes shimmer and sparkle in the bright light. At night, it is just as magnetic. The simplistic exterior lines, curves and loops, hide the magnificence inside. Don't forget to leave your footwear at the entrance and a climb up the minaret is a treat.



(Above) Close up of Muamar Gaddafi Mosque and the interior





Rubaga Cathedral

It was in the 1800s when Christian missionaries first wandered into Central Uganda. Their subsequent influence is clearly seen today in the churches perched atop the most prominent hills of Central Kampala. The Catholics were given Rubaga Hill where the Cathedral imposingly stands. This Romanesque structure with the twin belfry has all the trappings of great houses of worship found in Europe or South America. Once inside, the grandness is intensified by the colourful paintings and mosaics that depict a mix of both African and European influence united in their faith. It is here where you will find the remains of the first African Catholic Bishop in Uganda, Bishop Joseph Kiwanuka.

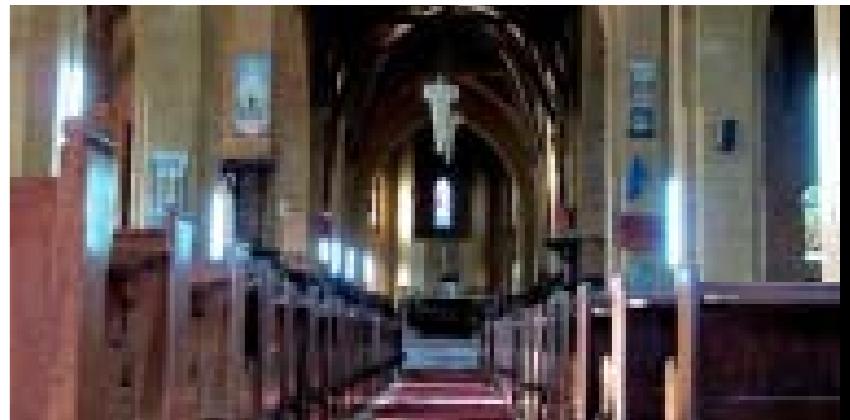


(Above) Rubaga Cathedral Interior showing altar and pews with beautiful arches and butresses



Namirembe Cathedral

Also known as St. Paul's Cathedral, Namirembe Hill is where the Protestants built their church which is reputedly the oldest in Uganda. Visitors would be surprised to know there have been at least four versions of this church since 1890. The current version was constructed between 1915 and 1919 using earthen bricks and earthen roof tiles. Recently, it was given a major overhaul that has redeemed its presence and added lustre to the dome. However, one most compelling thing about Namirembe is the organ piano.



(Above) Namirembe Cathedral Interior





Uganda Wildlife Education Center

After a 40 minute drive, Kampala is like a distant memory. A visit to the Uganda Wildlife Education Centre at Entebbe is fun. That goes for both young and old. There is always something interesting going on and the entry fee is not frightening. The place is well located such that Entebbe's legendary cool breeze is never far away from your face. The centre is a sanctuary of sorts but it also gives you a welcome opportunity to learn from experts much about Uganda's wildlife before you venture upcountry. Most of the major species are represented here.



Red Tailed Monkey (Top),
Shoe Bill (Top Left),
Pelican (Top Right)



(Left) Lions Playing.
The 'King of the Jungle'
doesn't look much of a roar
when he knows food is served
at 1pm sharp.

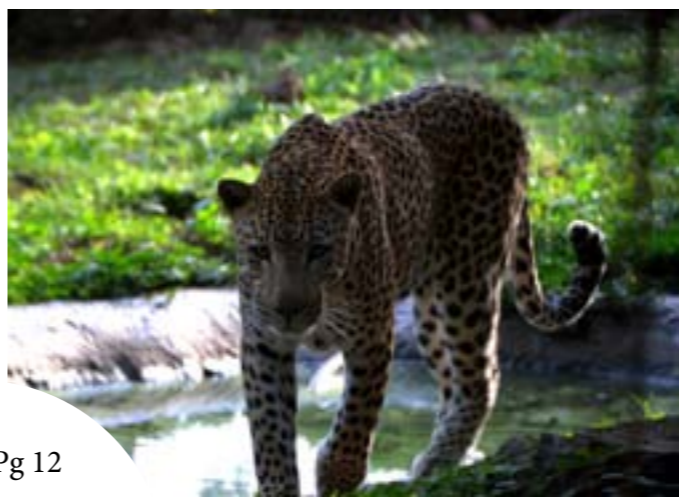


(Right) Lion Resting.



Folklore has it that the name
Kampala came from the
impala herds that once grazed
on Old Kampala Hill.

(Left) Water Bucks.



(Left)
Leopard on the prowl, but
don't worry healthy
ones prefer wild prey rather
than humans.

(Right) Visitors at the park.





(Left) The Ostrich.

Ungainly as the ostrich may look, this lovable non-flying bird can reach speeds of up to 70kph! Over to you Usain Bolt.



(Left) The Chimpanzee.

Chimps and monkeys are usually game to anything that challenges their intellectual capacity. Better still if there is a reward at the end.

(Right) Chimpanzee.



(Left) Peacock.

The peacock cannot help showing off its rich plumage to all and sundry but the fiercely independent eagle has supremacy in the skies.

(Right) The African Fish Eagle.



(Left) The Kid's Centre at the park.



(Left) Zebras.

The joy of the centre is that you cannot help marvel at the fact that these animals are within touching distance. Of course, that doesn't mean you attempt to unless permission is granted.



(Right) The Uganda Kob.



The Rhinos.





(Above) & (Top Right) Tourists' experience with the Python.

Snake Park

Conquer your fears. Pop in at the Snake Park, which is situated along the Kampala-Entebbe highway. Let the handlers guide you into understanding, caressing then holding these misunderstood reptiles. All the dreaded culprits are there including mamba, cobras and vipers. There are also pythons for good measure. Hard to believe, but at the Snake Park, it is frequently a case of love at first fright. Fear gradually gives way to fascination, as they coil and wrap themselves around you. You can get really close to some of the most dangerous reptiles at the Snake Park and still get back to your hotel safe and sound. Every precaution is taken so that nothing gets loose.



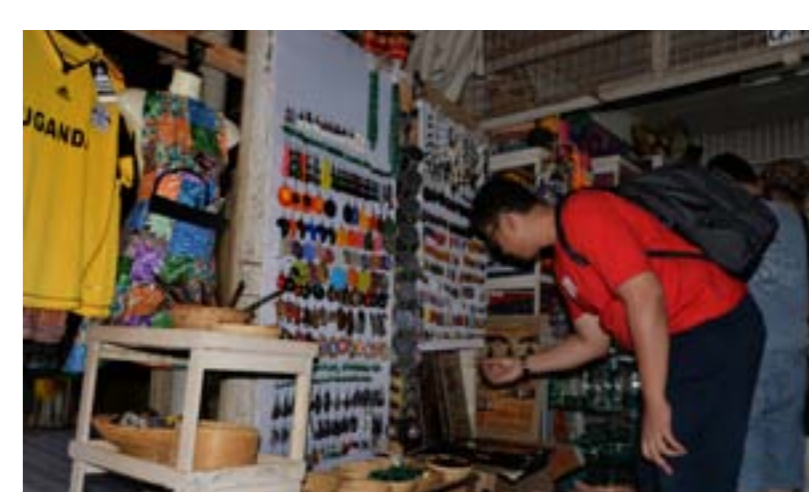
(Above) The Cobra.

There are no giant anacondas here, though that does not mean you will not get a kick out of watching them, watching you! Cobras and vipers use venom to immobilize their prey which the handlers will gladly explain to you. The term 'poisonous snake' is incorrectly used. Poison is inhaled or ingested, but venom is injected. A snake's tongue is always in motion because it is the organ it uses to smell out any prey. Some varieties of snakes have a lifespan of more than 40 years if given proper care.



Craft Village on Buganda Road

This is one of the better places in Kampala to buy colourful kitenges, sculptures, paintings and other curios to take back home with you. Bargaining is part of the deal, so don't accept the first quoted price. The village is enclosed and safe to browse around, but it doesn't hurt to keep your bag close to the chest. On display is a wide selection of items that define Uganda. It could be a clay pot, sandals, various drums, flutes or milk carriers. It is impossible to know exactly what will catch your fancy until you are actually there. But one thing is for sure, to leave Uganda without something to remind you of this singular experience would be a crying shame!



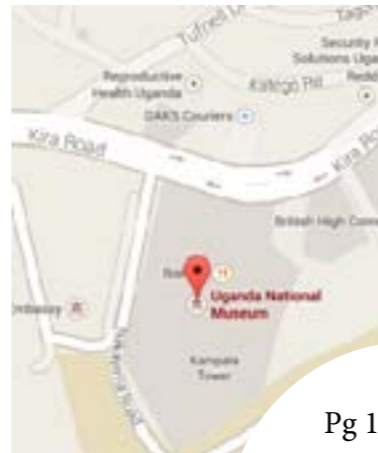


The Uganda Museum

The Uganda Museum is along Kira road, not far from the British High Commission. It sits on a nice expanse of green with a view of parts of Nakasero Hill. The Uganda Museum is an ideal place to start for getting some solid grounding about the country, its people, cultures and traditions. If you are lucky, someone may demonstrate a musical instrument. There are always groups of school children at the museum which gives it a welcoming touch. The staff encourage questions, so don't be shy! It is airy inside. Some of the exhibits go back decades, but the it is fascinating to see how Uganda has evolved. You can buy a curio as a keepsake to remember your visit. The grounds of the museum offer sanctuary for some quiet reading or a short nap before you move on to your next destination.



If you are lucky, someone may even demonstrate a musical instrument to tickle your ears. Do not forget to ask about that cannon at the entrance.



Located on Kira road Kamwokya about 10minutes' drive from the city centre.



The grounds also offer a sanctuary for checking your itinerary or a short read before you move on to your next spot.

On the museum grounds is a culture village which is very popular with school children, because it transforms book text into reality.

All the peoples of Uganda have displays that help convey a substantial part of their heritage.



The first Ford Model T to hit Uganda's roads still gives the impression it can go for another round except there's no engine under the hood.





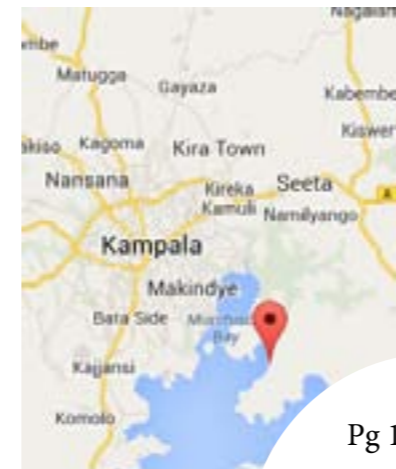
The European bee-eater

Serenada Eco Tourism Site

It's all about paddling power. No motor engines here unless you want to scare away the various species of birds that surround the serenada eco-resort.



The site is situated about 35 minutes from Ggaba by boat.

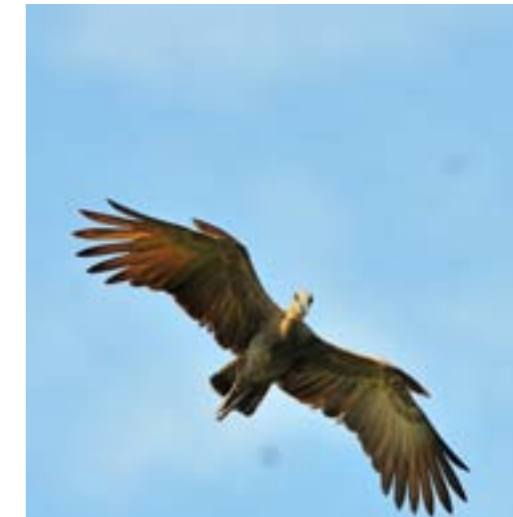


With a tropical forest that hugs the lake shore, Serenada is indeed a paradise both for the watchers and the birds themselves.

At Serenada, you will come across other rarely seen bird species that might make you think again.

*(Right)
The Hamerkop in Flight.*

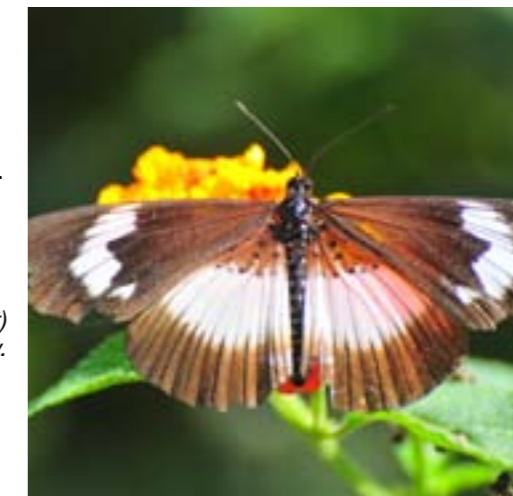
*(Extreme Right)
The White Egret.*



Few birds can beat the Grey crowned crane for its elegance. After all, it is Uganda's national symbol.

*(Right)
Butterfly.*

*(Extreme Right)
The Dragon Fly.*





The Nakayima Tree

Uganda has its share of ancient mysticism. Few are as exciting as the tales and myths that surround the short-lived Bachwezi Empire. Only three kings, Ndahura, Mulindwa and Wamara are recorded to have reigned. No one is quite sure where these tall regal cattle-keepers came from and why they seemingly disappeared. Over the years however, the folklore associated with Bachwezi has taken on a religious fervour symbolized by such sites as Nakayima Tree located on a hill that overlooks Mubende town, nearly 200 kilometres North West of Kampala.

Nakayima, a favourite medium for King Ndahura, once lived here and her spirit resides in the tree which also symbolizes fertility and other blessings.

Certain rituals must be undertaken to have any chance of getting any favours from Nakayima. This includes circling it while making your offerings, all prescribed by a Jjaja who acts like a guardian at this shrine.

(Above) Women paying homage to the Nakayima tree



The intricate root structure at the base of this 40-metre high tree has created crevices and shadowy fissures that inspire deep meditation and prayer. There is a never-ending line of supplicants.

The significance of the tree lies in the acceptance that this is a tangible link to the Bachwezi who once roamed these lands many hundreds of years ago.



The Equator

Uganda is one of the few countries in the world where the imaginary line that divides the earth into two halves passes. The Uganda Equator crosses into Uganda at a point situated 72km south of Kampala along the Kampala – Masaka road.

At this point, there are two cement circles marking the equator line and it is worth stopping if you are traveling to Masaka or Kampala for a photo moment. Also, watch a demonstration by a local entrepreneur on how water swirls in opposite directions in the Northern & Southern hemispheres at the Equator line. Other Equator markers are located in Kasese district within the Queen Elizabeth National Park, 420km Southwest of Kampala.



On your way to the western region from the capital, Kampala, you cannot miss the equator in Mpigi. Like a colossus, you can plant one foot in the southern hemisphere and another in the northern.



WESTERN UGANDA



Overview

When you take the western safari circuit, be prepared to be amazed. Not at the speeding coaches that zip pass you, but at the spectacular scenery slowly unfolding before your eyes. It never fails to impress. In the meantime, don't forget to tell folks back home how you crisscrossed between the southern and northern hemispheres 10 times in one minute! It is a secret you will soon find out along the way. The flat lands and savannah gradually give way to a cascade of rising hills that never seem to end. Some basics are necessary to explain all this. About 25 million years ago, eastern Africa was wrenched apart by tectonic plates, causing land masses to rise and others to sink. The result is this landscape of high altitude lakes and towering mountains often covered by thick rainforests or snow. A substantial part of western Uganda lies along the ridges and slopes of the Western Rift. Consequently, it can get very cold, so make sure you take warm clothing along with you. The region is sometimes referred to as 'the land of milk and honey'. This is with good reason. The longhorned Ankole cattle hold a cherished position amongst the people. These noble, slow moving animals were originally herded

down from ancient Egypt 2000 years ago. One particular breed is known as the 'Cattle of Kings'. A reminder that for hundreds of years it was Kings who ruled here. However, the inhabitants of western Uganda are descendants of both pastoralists and farmers. Those who till and grow crops along the steep hills today, do it in a manner that seems to defy gravity. In other areas, terrace gardens become artistic wonders. To understand more about Banyankole, Banyoro, Batoro, Bafumbira and Batwa, the best place to start, is the Igongo Centre and Museum. Luckily, it is conveniently located along the Kampala-Mbarara highway just before Mbarara town. There is also an annex that acts as a hotel for a longer stay. Every aspect of these cultures is displayed and explained under one roof. Other peoples across Uganda are also featured, but it is the story of western Uganda that gets the spotlight. In a nutshell, after the mass migration of people from the direction of Egypt and Ethiopia, slowed to a halt, centralized kingdoms later emerged by the fifteenth century in Uganda. For western Uganda, the most prominent were the Bunyoro-Kitara and Ankole kingdoms.





Queen Elizabeth National Park

Tree Climbing Lions Of Ishasha.

At Queen Elizabeth National Park, it sometimes seems the sky is much closer. Not surprising. This protected area of nearly 2000 square kilometres is higher in altitude than Kampala. The park was named to honour the coronation of Queen Elizabeth in the early 1950s and is one of the most popular for visitors. The reasons are not hard to find. Volcanic action in the distant past has left picturesque features like Lake George to the northeast and Lake Edward to the southwest boundaries of the park. There are also craters filled with forests that occasionally remind one of Jurassic Park. But there are no dinosaurs here. Just a large variety of wildlife against a backdrop of natural beauty rarely found anywhere else. In 1959, Dr. Hugh Catt said: "Uganda's parklands fulfill a deep human need. For in these tracts of earth not only the animal creation but man himself can find a sanctuary, and retreat from routine into the reality of a world apart."

He was talking about Queen Elizabeth National Park.



(Left) Buffalos.

Take as many photos as you want, the animals don't mind!

(Right) Tourists on a boat cruise at Kazinga Channel.



Attractions at Queen Elizabeth National Park can be so overwhelming that it is often required that one gets on top of the situation.

(Right) Tourists on a game drive Ishasha.



The hooked beaks clearly indicate these are finely tuned fishers, but humans can also try their luck at particular sites in the park.

(Left) Lesser flamingoes at Katwe Salt Lake.

Accessing this awe-inspiring park from Kampala is either on tarmac through Mbarara (420 km) or Fort Portal via Kasese (410km). Accommodation within the park for you to enjoy the wilderness is available as well as in the bordering towns of Kasese, Fort Portal, Bundibugyo.





(Left) The African Fish Eagle.

Experts say there are about 9,600 bird species in the world, but according to *Birding Uganda*, the record for the number of species recorded locally in a three-week period is 665!



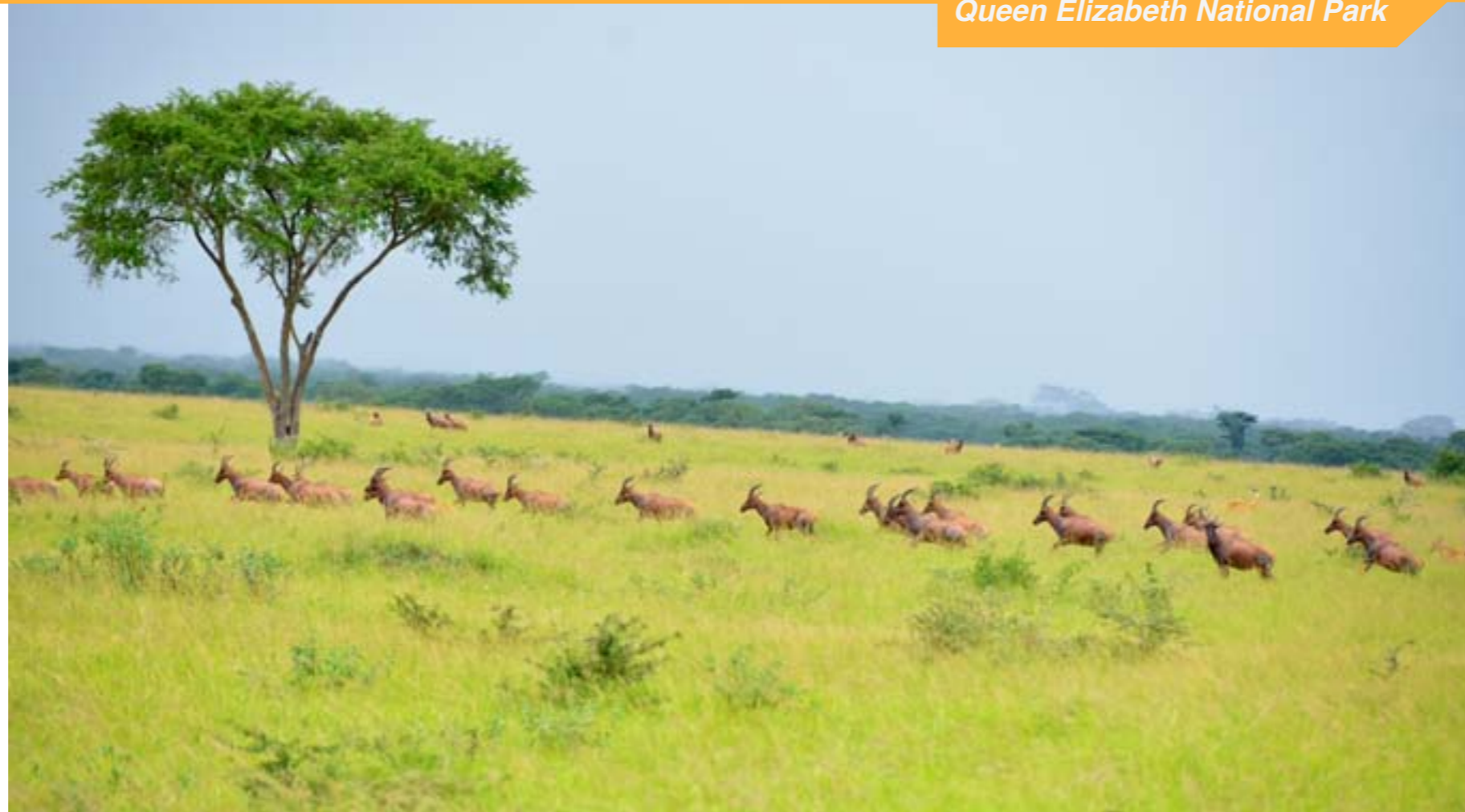
(Left) Pied Wagtail.

(Left) Malachite kingfisher.



In Ancient Egypt, the hippo was considered as the deity for pregnancy. Perhaps that explains why the women folk drove it out the Nile Valley in protests. Queen Elizabeth National Park has the largest concentration of hippos in Africa.

(Right) Hippos sun bathing Ishasha.



Elephants are very closely knit, usually led by a matriarch and woe to anybody who tries to disturb their peace.

After a long trek through the grasslands, having a bath is considered one of the high points of the elephant's day.

(Right) Elephants at Kazinga Channel.

(Left) The Topis of Ishasha.



The significance of the elephant's close relationship to the park is reflected in this statue on the grounds of Mweya Lodge.



(Right) The crocodiles are renowned for their sense of humour which however only applies when they are well fed.





(Left) The Egyptian Goose.

There is plenty to occupy the diehard bird watchers. Quite a number of these species follow the migratory trend of breeding in Asia and Europe but wintering in Africa.



(Left) Spur-winged plover at katwe.

Enthusiasts will have feverish nights trying to guess what rare bird will get focused in their binoculars the next day. Bird watchers with a life list will be able to add more after a week at Queen Elizabeth National Park.



(Left) The Sacred Ibis- Katwe.

(Right) The Salt Mines Of Katwe.

Lake Katwe is the largest salt lake in Uganda. It has a circumference of eight kilometres. Every day, just over 20 streams pour fresh water into the lake from the surrounding rocks.



At times, you can think you are the last person on earth considering the immensity of beauty.

Experts say, the park has five levels of vegetation. These are bushy grassland, Acacia woodland, Lakeshore or swamp vegetation along with forest grassland.

(Right) Buffalo with the African skimmer.

(Left) The sunset over Lake Edward.



(Right) Monitor Lizard.

Watch your step. It may not be the T-Rex, but it's bite can make up for its puny size.





Kibale National Park

The chimpanzee

Kibale National Park is all about trekking chimpanzees. When the going gets tough, there is no embarrassment in taking a break. That is until you hear the chimps loudly urging you not to give up. Kibale prides itself as being Africa's top protected area for primates, numbering an estimated 13 species. Being a rainforest, the humidity in Kibale can get uncomfortable. But the vegetation is luxuriant and dense. Often hikers will come across a tangled growth of vines that are intertwined with the tree trunks. It may look like an animal, but it's really plant matter. Kibale cannot be appreciated in a day, so you are best advised to book in at a lodge and get the best value for your visit. Chimps can be elusive when they want to be, but once you have them in your sights they cannot fail to enchant you with their antics.



*(Top)
The Red Colobus monkey,
and the Black cheeeked Mangbey
in Bigodi swamp (bottom)*

Kibale National Park is located in the districts of Kabarole and Kamwenge, approximately 320 kilometres (200 mi), by road, west of Kampala. Road transport is the most common means of getting to Kibaale National Park.



(Left) Weaver bird.



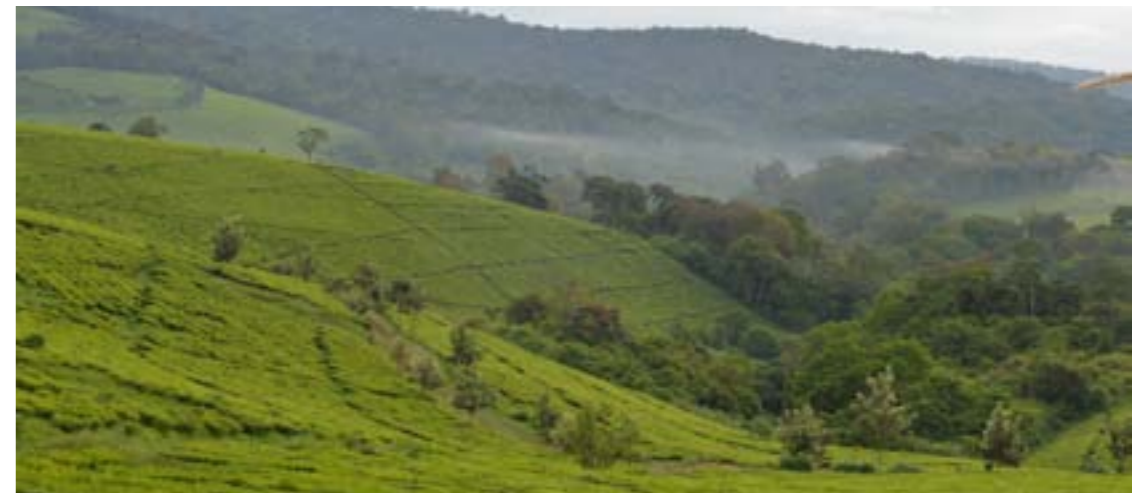
A new study suggests the common ancestors of humans and chimps may have begun geneticaly separating 13 million years ago.

(Right) The road to Kibale.

All treks through the forest are with a trained guide or warden. This is because adult common chimpanzees, particularly males, can be very aggressive.

The cool weather and rich soils is ideal for growing some of Uganda's best tea.

(Right) Tea plantation near Kibale.





(Left) Community tourism.

Enjoy the experience of being one with the community. Eat a traditional meal. It may mean doing without tables and chairs, but after the first mouthful you will not regret it!



(Left) A woman weaving a basket

Chimps are generally fruit and plant eaters, but they also consume insects, eggs, and meat. However, you are advised not to feed them.

Chimpanzees are our closest living relatives, sharing more than 98% of our genetic blueprint. Humans and chimps are also thought to share a common ancestor who lived some four to eight million years ago.



You cannot underestimate the importance of Kibale National Park. Rainforests now cover less than 6% of earth's land surface. Scientists estimate that more than half of all the world's plant and animal species live in tropical rain forests like Kibale. Tropical rainforests produce 40% of Earth's oxygen.

(Right) A tourist admiring a baby.



(Right) A wound stem in the deeper parts of the forest.

Viewing chimps on your back is one way to ease the strain on your neck.



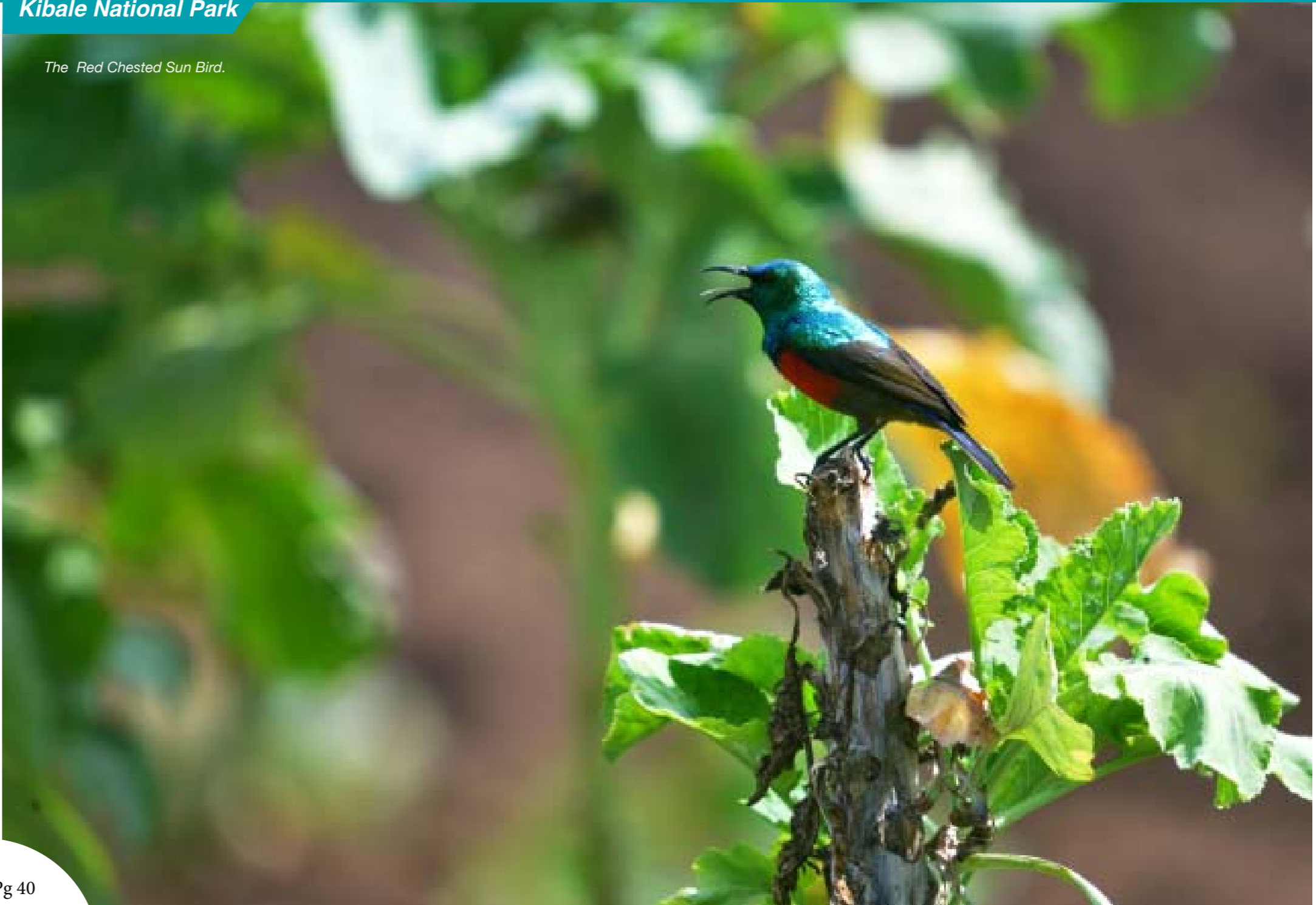
Kibale National Park

An impressive view of the landscape and calm presence of Lake Nyabikere.



Kibale National Park

The Red Chested Sun Bird.





The Female Hot Spring.



(Above) The Male Hot Springs.



(Left) Students' Tour.



(Right) Intermediate Heron , Lake Albert Tooro Semuliki Wildlife Reserve.

Semuliki National Park

The remoteness of Semliki National Park near the border with the Democratic Republic of Congo and part of the huge Ituri Forest, makes it a haven for birds. Many of these species you cannot find on the beaten path. Fort Portal is the closest major town.

At the first glance, the scenery may seem bleak to the eye. The forests are not as lush as others in region but this is where you will find several natural hot springs that bubble away softly. There are also salt deposits much favoured by the surrounding wildlife.

This park also boasts of being centered in one of Africa's most ancient and bio-diverse forests. You are literally taken back in time. Semliki is best suited for hikers who can take the trails and delight in seeing such bird species as the Red-billed Helmet Shrike and the Long-tailed Hawk. It is a campers' haven, where the trappings of civilization are almost non-existent.

Semuliki National Park lies along the main Fort Portal to Bundibugyo road, 52 km from Fort Portal.

This road can become treacherous after heavy rains, so best times to sightsee would be during the fairly dry season. Campsites and accommodation can be got from within the park and hotels in the surrounding towns of Fort Portal and Bundibugyo.



(Left) The Batwa of Ntandi in Semuliki.



(Right) The Northern Red Bishop at Tooro Semuliki Wildlife Reserve.



(Left)
A visibly happy Mutwa woman.



(Left)
Craft making in Bundibugyo.



(Left)
Woman hawking bananas in Bundibugyo.



(Right)
The Semuliki River valley.



(Right)
Lake Albert and the Rift Valley escarpment.



(Right)
The Uganda Kob in Tooro Semuliki wildlife reserve.



(Right)
Blue-headed Agama lizard.



Portal peaks.

Rwenzori National Park

The summit is shrouded in mist. However, the shadowy slopes of the Rwenzori Mountains, located in Rwenzori Mountains National Park, have about them an air of mystery. The Rwenzoris demand your attention, curiosity and respect. These are the legendary 'Mountains of the Moon'. At 4000 metres, the range is among Africa's highest. A visit to Rwenzori Mountains National Park means having a good pair of hiking boots. This is the only way to appreciate the glaciers, rivers, waterfalls and lakes. The Mountains are the homelands of the Bakonjo and Bamba people. The Bakonjo have lived here

for countless generations. Their culture is adapted to the steep slopes and climate. That is why they also make the best guides and porters. Legend says the earliest people in the area evoked the Moon, because the snow-caps can be seen from a distance. The park is filled with alpine vegetation. Take one of the many trails which pass under overhanging giant heathers and vast bamboo clusters. Not surprisingly, the park is filled with nearly 100 species of birds. They compete in making the most noise with the Colobus monkeys swinging in the tree branches.

The distance between Kampala and these mountains is 415km and the estimated transit time is between 6 - 8hrs.

It takes 8 to 9 days to climb to the Magherita Peak and back.



(Left)
Some of the peaks of the Rwenzoris.



There are five different vegetation zones found in the Rwenzori Mountains.

You will come across a host of unusual plants and flowers worthy of a snap shot. This idyllic place attracts some of the most colourful butterflies and birds in the world.



(Right)
Lake Mahoma.



(Left)
A colorful butterfly.

(Right)
A three-horned chameleon.



View of Lake Mahoma with mist covered Rwenzori in the background.



Bee-eaters.





(Left)
Impatiens flower.



(Left)
Bamboo zone.



(Left)
Tree covered with Spanish moss.

(Right)
Everlasting flowers.



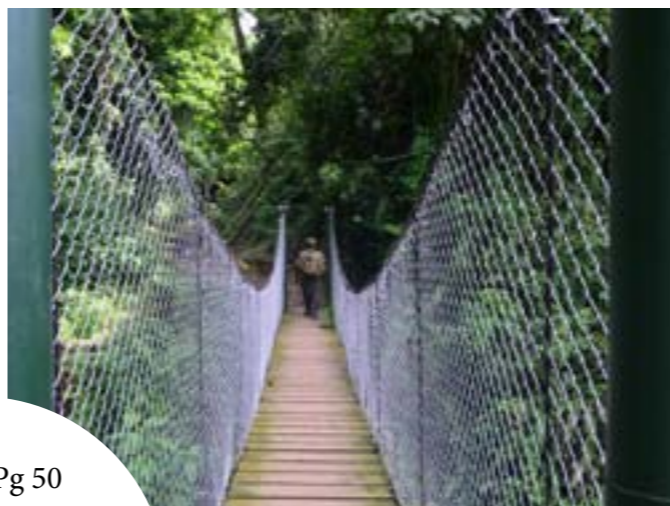
(Right)
Game ranger studying the park map.



High and regular rainfall in the mountains also means bountiful supplies of all sorts of foodstuffs. After tasting some of the pumpkins, you may decide never to leave.



(Left)
Bountiful harvest.



(Left)
Bridge on one of the streams.





Lake Mburo National Park

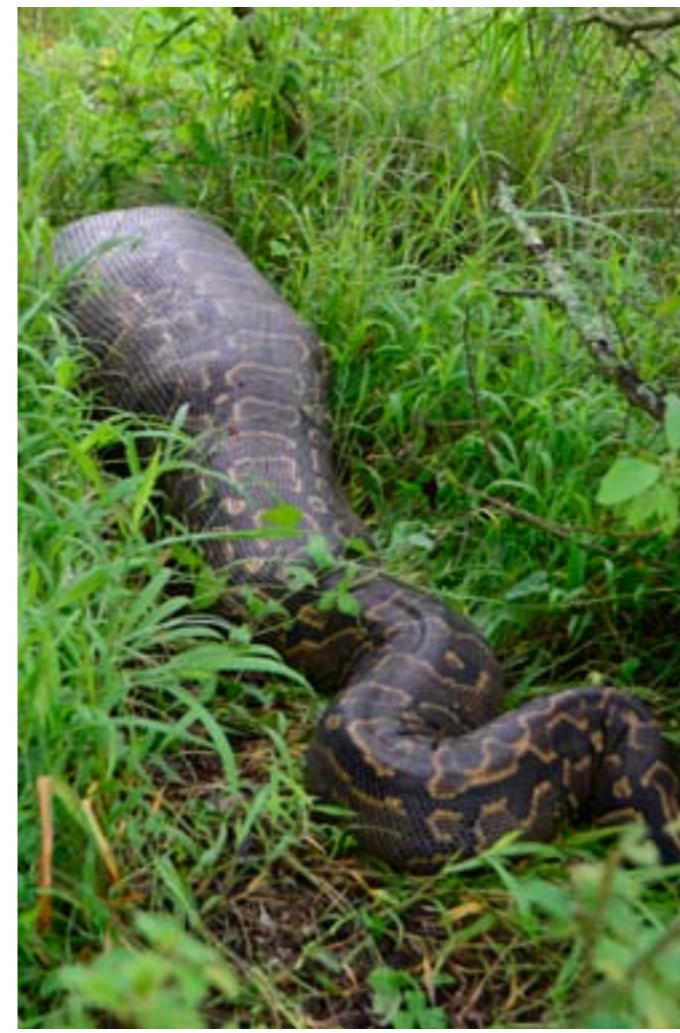
Sunset over Lake Mburo

About 200 kilometres from Kampala, Lake Mburo National Park, is convenient for visitors who have never seen animals in the wild. It allows for closer viewing and exceptional photographs.

At 260 square kilometres, it is Uganda's smallest national park, but by no means the least interesting. The sight of a galloping Impala in full flight can take your breath away. You can cruise the lake for a spot of fishing or simply admire the shoreline which at certain hours teems with wildlife.

View of the park from Mihingo

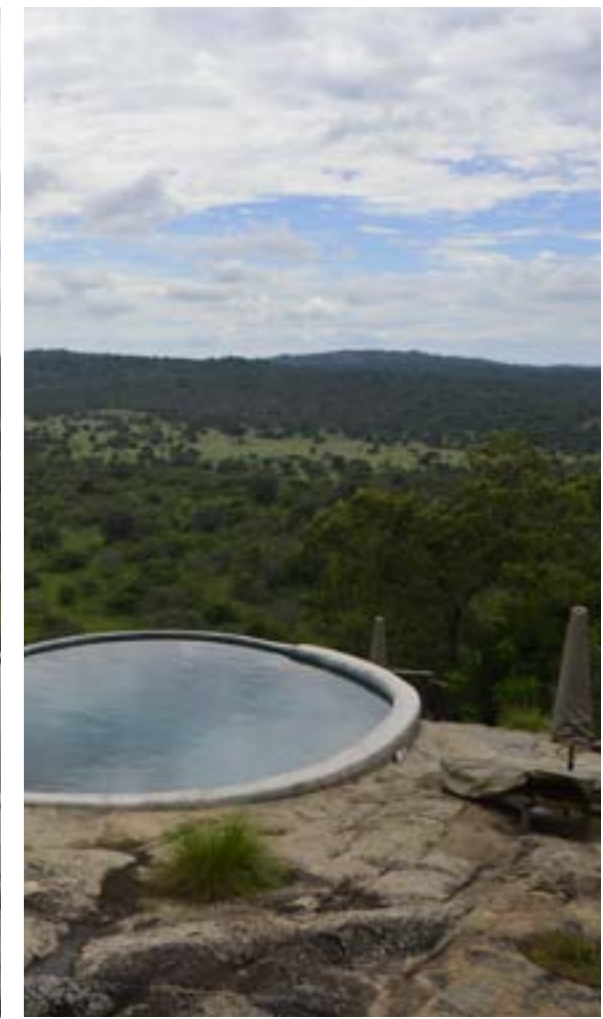
This park is situated approximately 200 kilometres by road, west of Kampala, Uganda's capital.



The park is known for its abundance of zebras, impala, buffalo and over 300 bird species.

The sight of a galloping Impala in full flight can take your breath away.

(Left) A Python after a heavy meal.



(Right) Buffalos.



Zebras are in abundance; hence the expression, "Home of Zebras". They relish it by prancing and preening themselves in front of bored Buffaloes who couldn't care less.

(Left) Zebra.

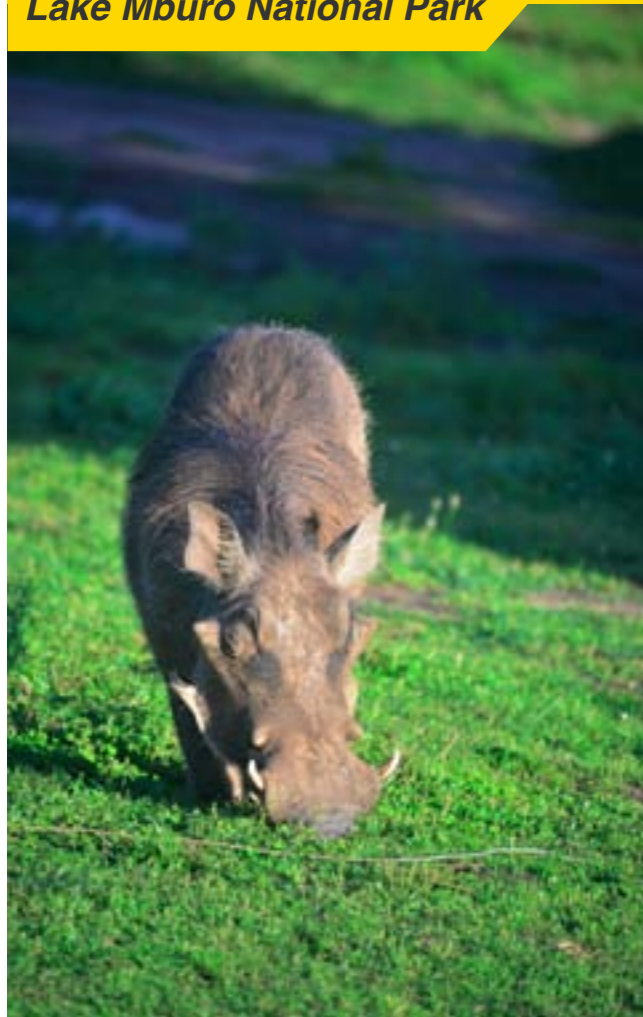


Impalas darting across the plains.



Male Water Buck.





(Left) Warthog.

Warthogs have found Lake Mburo entirely to their liking.

By nature, Warthogs firmly believe in the minding their own business.

There are designated camp sites but if the outdoors do not suit you, don't fret. There is always Mihingo Lodge perched high on a cliff that overlooks the park, complete with a swimming pool.

Mihingo Lodge provides 10 rooms, but the novelty is that the rooms are built on wooden platforms with stilts and covered by a thatched roof.



(Left) Birds in flight.

(Right) Cape buffalo.



(Left) Bushbuck.



You will have no trouble finding a keepsake to remind you of Lake Mburo's charms, but don't forget to pop in at the Ankole Culture Centre.

(Left) Eland.



(Left) Sacred Ibis.



(Left) Ruppells' long-tailed starling.



Mountain Gorilla in Bwindi

Bwindi Impenetrable Forest National Park

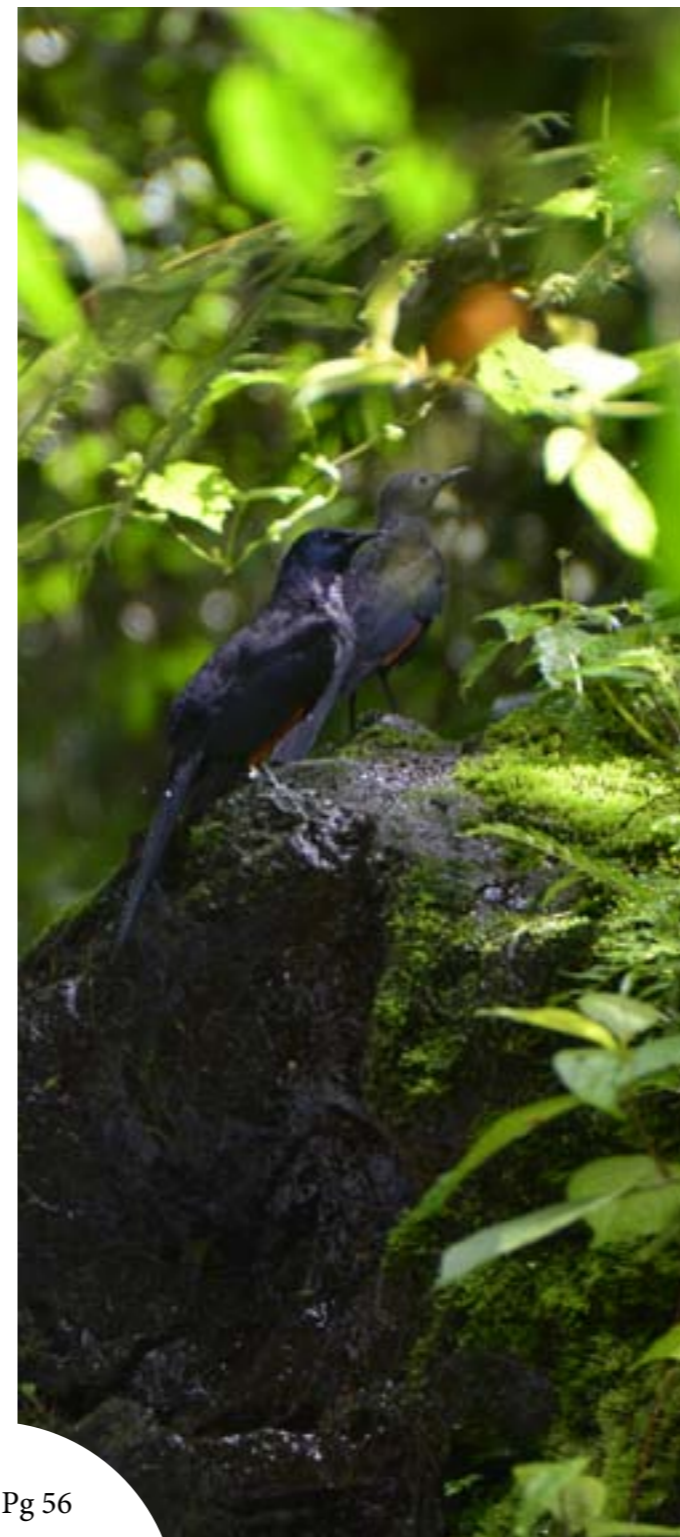
At the southwest corner of Uganda, lies the Bwindi Impenetrable Forest National Park. It is famous for Mountain Gorilla but please note you need a permit to trek them. Half of the remaining gorillas are found in Uganda; just about all of them have names.

Bwindi is probably Uganda's most sensitive place to go, because these close cousins of humankind are an endangered species. Their welfare is not taken lightly since most of us still want them around!

It takes patience and some stamina to track gorillas. However, you simply cannot put in words the feelings of awe and fascination once you get a sighting.

The distance between Kampala and these mountains is 415km and the estimated transit time is between 6 - 8hrs.

Good and affordable accommodation is also available on the slopes of the mountain and neighboring towns like Kasese plus camping sites on the mountain slopes.



(Left) Starling.

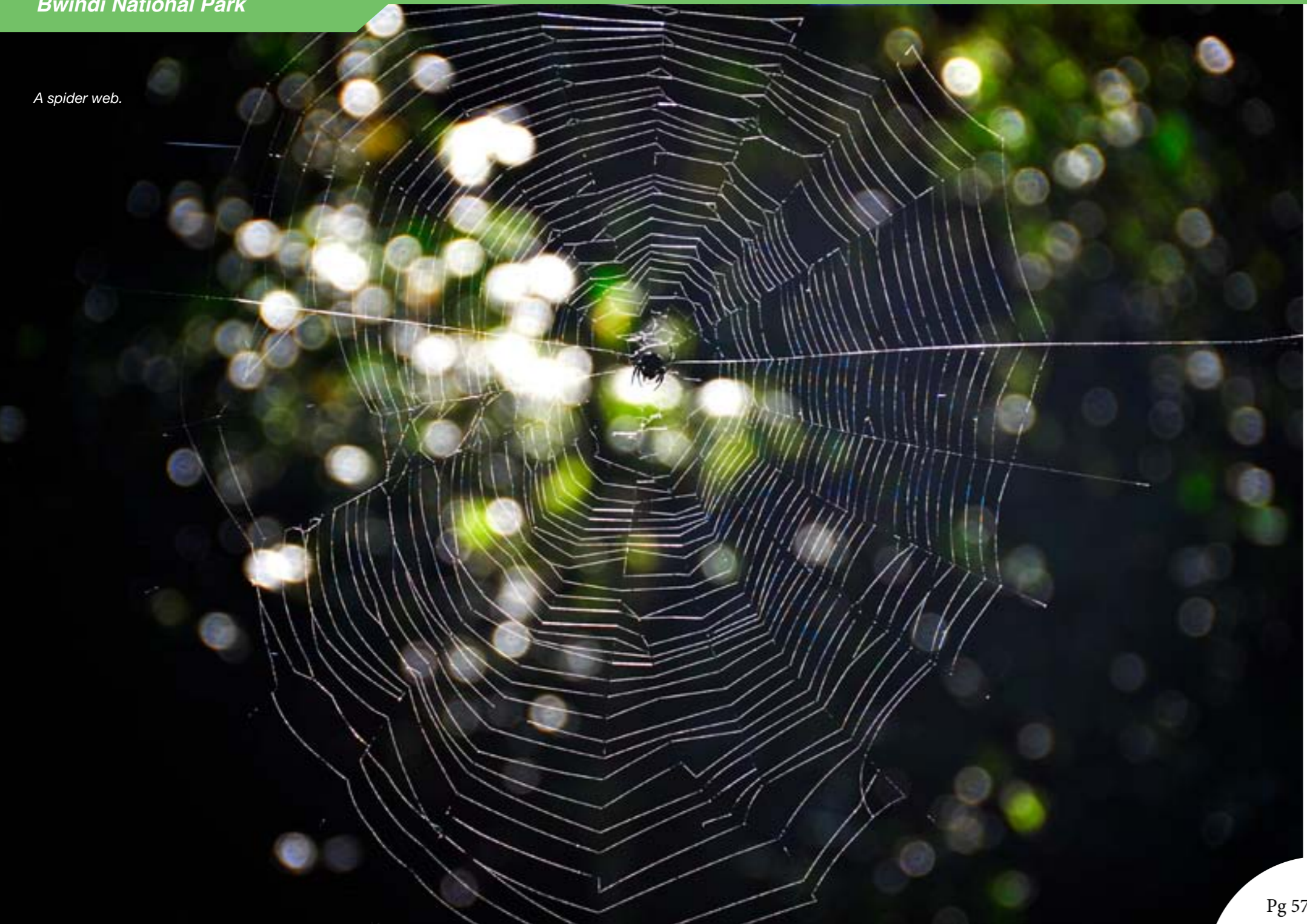
(Right) The Munyaga Falls.



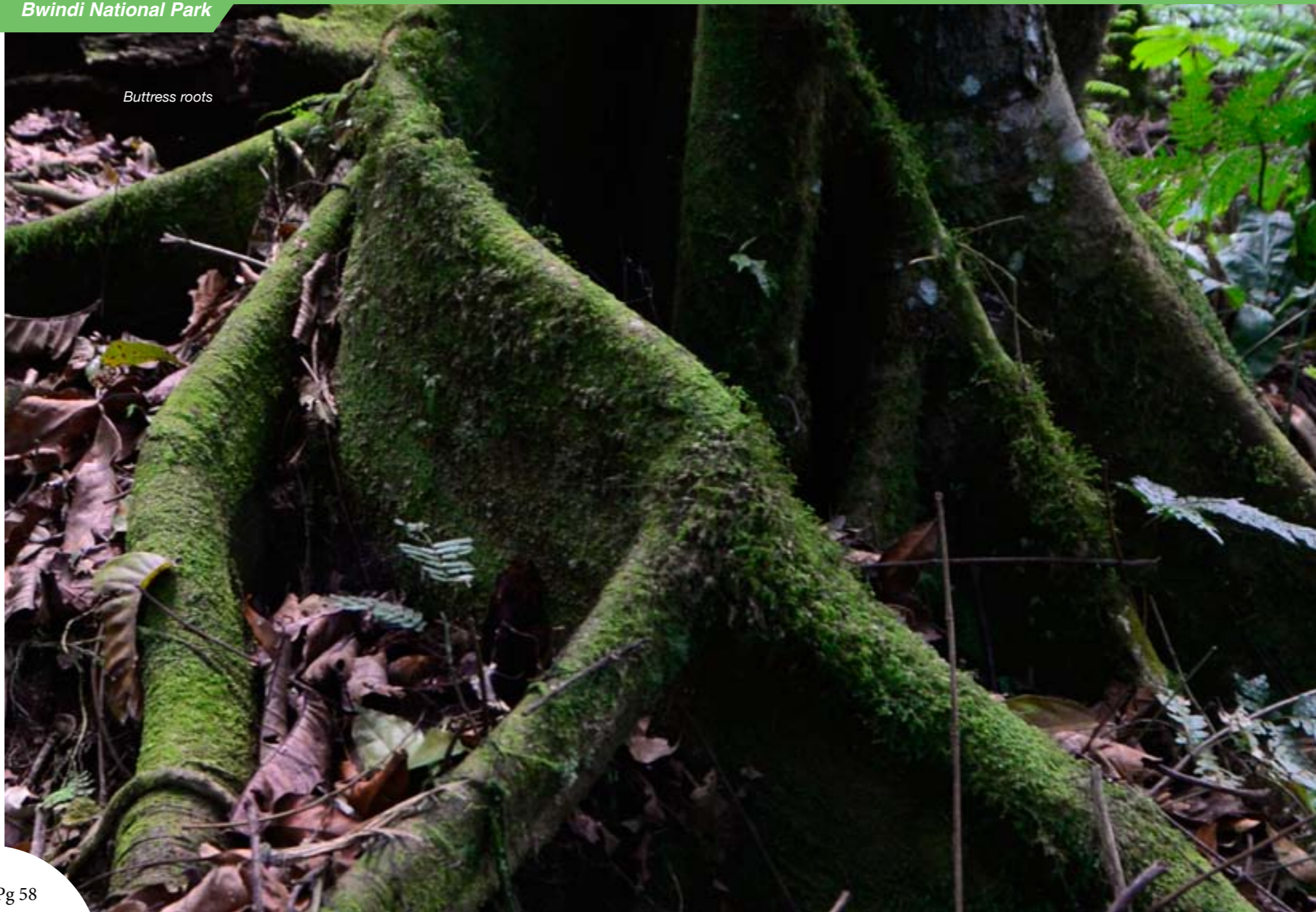
(Right) Slug.



A spider web.



Buttress roots





(Left)
Hunting in Bwindi forest.



(Left)
The Batwa community of Bwindi.



(Right)
Tea growing on Kisoro landscapes.



(Left)
A woman from the Batwa community drinking from a wooden cup.



(Left)
Art and crafts by the Batwa community.



(Right)
Demonstrating how to make fire.



(Left)
A Mukiga woman.



(Left)
Tourists watching birds.



(Left)
Gorilla tracking
by all means.



(Right)
Gorilla tracking.



(Left)
Mountain Gorilla.



(Left)
Playful young mountain
gorilla.



(Left)
A craft shop.



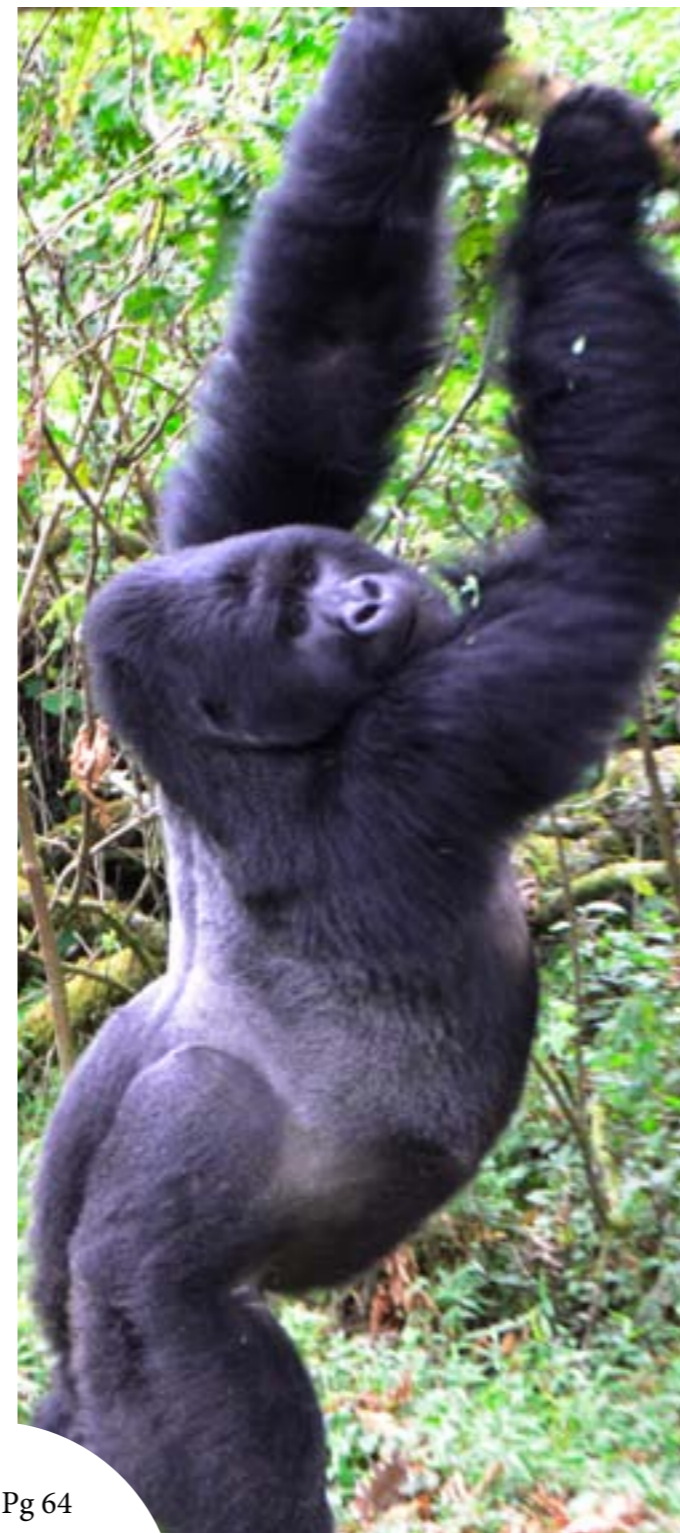
Mgahinga Gorilla National Park

Landscape of Kisoro with Muhavura, Gahinga and Sabinyo Ranges in the background

Mgahinga Gorilla National Park sits high in the clouds, at an altitude of between 2000 and just over 4000 metres.

As its name suggests, it was created to protect the rare mountain gorillas that inhabit its dense forests, and it is also an important habitat for the endangered golden monkey.

Mgahinga's most striking features are its three conical, extinct volcanoes, part of the spectacular Virunga Range that lies along the border region of Uganda, Congo and Rwanda. Mgahinga forms part of the much larger Virunga Conservation Area which includes adjacent parks in these countries.



*(Left)
Stretching Silverback.*

It is a humbling experience to be in their presence. They are after all humankind's closest cousins. Gorillas can climb trees, but are usually found on the ground in communities of up to 30 individuals.

You require a permit to trek gorillas and may have to book well in advance to have this encounter.



*(Right)
Relaxing Juvenile Mountain Gorilla.*



(Left)
Rock Hyrax in
Mgahinga Kisoro.

(Right)
Young girls playing.

At just over 4000 metres in height, the Muhavura dominates the skyline around Kisoro district. It seems to be brooding about bygone days when it was an active volcano that helped to define the landscape of the region. There is an air of mysticism surrounding Muhavura complemented by the mist that often covers its summit.



(Right)
Winding road
through hilly Kisoro.

(Left)
Kisoro views.



(Left)
Mufumbira woman
hawking crafts in
Kisoro town.

(Right)
Kisoro
landscapes.

At the south west tip of Uganda is the living tapestry of Kisoro district. It is composed of steep terraced hills that bewilder the eye. Apparently those who farm these hills have learnt to defy gravity.



(Left)
Caterpillar.

(Right)
Chameleone.



It is not advisable to think of Batwa as 'pygmies'. In many ways, they are still the guardians of the Bwindi Impenetrable Forest.

It was their former home until 1992, when it was designated a national park. You will also find their settlements in Kisoro district around the Mgahinga National Park.

*(Right)
Entrance to the
Ngarama Batwa cave.*

*(Left)
The Batwa of
Mgahinga, Kisoro.*



*(Right)
Top view of the
Ngarama cave.*



Scenery that never fails to impress!



Young boys relaxing with mist-covered Muhavura in the background.



A happy Mutwa man.



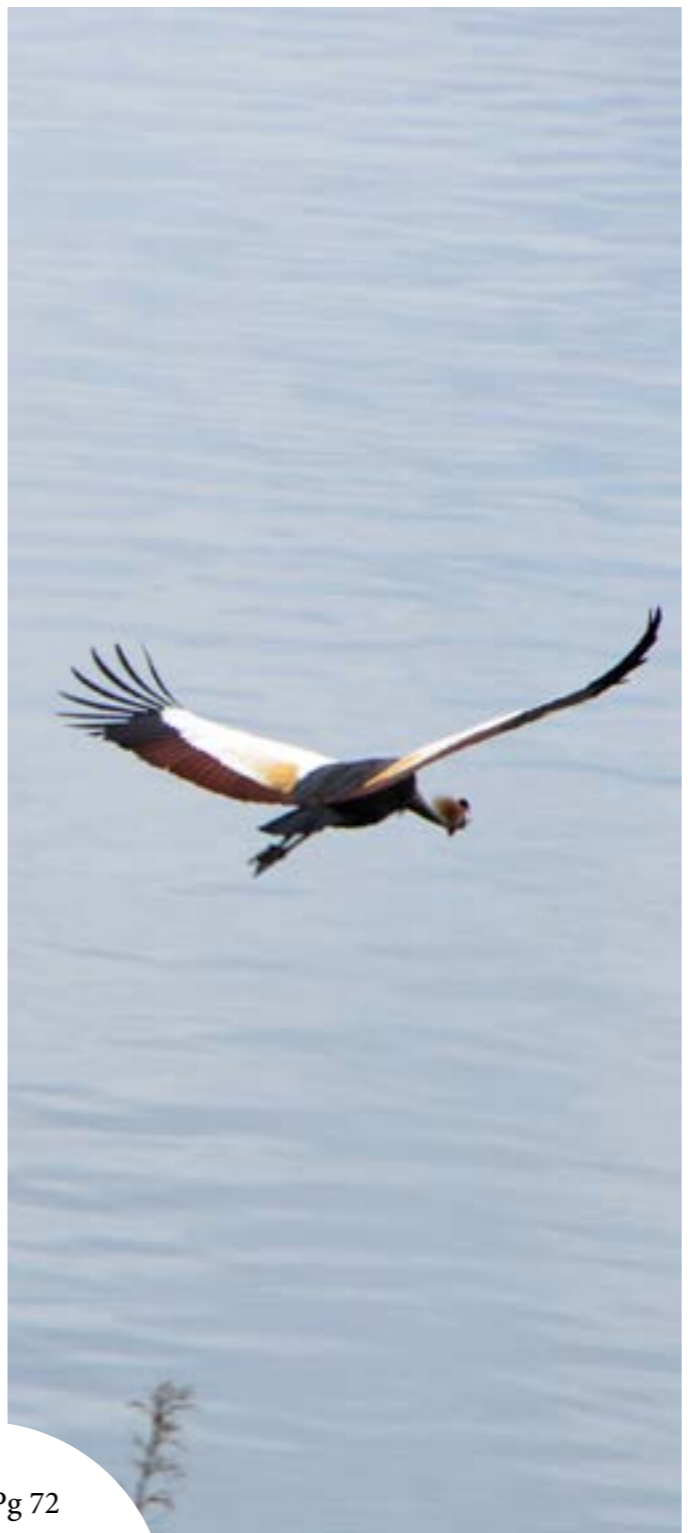
Journey Through the Peak, Uganda Tourism Catalogue 2014



Lake Bunyonyi

Shangri-La was a mythical paradise high up in the Himalaya Mountains. Lake Bunyonyi, ('Place of many little birds') is as close as you can get to Shangri-La anywhere on this Earth. Some 2500 metres above sea level and about 8,000 years old, Lake Bunyonyi is situated in south western Uganda. The sense of serenity here is equal to none. It explains the presence of over 250 bird species. The birds skim and splash over the waters in absolute harmony. Others paddle on the surface or streak into the air and begin mock fights amidst loud screeches. Other wildlife in the vicinity is less noisy, but just as captivating beside the placid lake.

(Above)
The incredible Lake Bunyonyi, rumoured to be the 2nd deepest lake in Africa is located 450 Km from Kampala - a journey of 7 hours and 6km from Kabale town.



Take the canoe to Bushara Island. It is one of 29 that give the whole area a magical effect intensified by the overwhelming shades of rich green. Being a place of birds, it would be a surprise not to see any for even a second, but there is also a distinct calm about Lake Bunyonyi.

(Right)
Scenery at Lake Bunyonyi.

(Left)
The Grey Crested Crane in flight.

The birds may rule in terms of the racket they sometimes make. Nevertheless, the other wildlife is not intimidated.

(Right)
Greater comorants on the lake.





(Left)
Tourists enjoying a 'Rolex' around Lake Bunyonyi.



Being playful comes easy at Lake Bunyonyi as the cares of the world simply slip away.

It is reputed to be one of the deepest lakes in Africa. The waters are placid and ripple softly whenever the flutter of bird wings disturbs the surface.

(Left)
Tourists on a bike with the lake in the background.



(Left)
Tourists having a photo moment.

(Right)
Waterbucks at Kyahugye Island- Bunyonyi.



(Left)
View of the lake from Kyahugye Island.

(Right)
Tourists having a hearty laugh with the locals.

Lake Bunyonyi has the enduring quality to inspire absolute contentment that bubbles over into the widest of smiles.



(Right)
Relaxing with a refreshing view of the lake.

(Left)
Pied Wagtail at Kyahugye Island.



The Tombs of Bunyoro

Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom is one of the oldest Kingdoms in Africa. According to the historians, the Kingdom wielded the strongest military and economic power in the Great Lakes Region between the 14th and 17th centuries.

At that time, the Kingdom covered much of the current Uganda, parts of Eastern Congo, Western Tanzania, Northern Kenya and small parcels of Burundi and Rwanda.

In the 1880s, the British Colonial Officers, desperate for economic resources, waged war on Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom. The purpose was to weaken the authority, influence and prestige of Omukama Yohana Cwa II Kabalega and destroy the only remaining independent and wealthy Bunyoro Kingdom.

For a long interlude, Kabalega held off the British forces and this act somersaulted his name to alongside 'greatest'. He was later captured during 1899 and banished to the Seychelles where he eventually died in exile but his remains were brought back. The remains of the Omukamas of Bunyoro are not buried but laid out in small crypts at the Mparo tombs.

Each is covered in bark-cloth, and surrounding it are the possessions of that particular Omukama. This may include weapons and other notable personal items.

The biggest tomb at Mparo belongs to Kabalega.

(Right)

Regalia that the former kings were buried with.





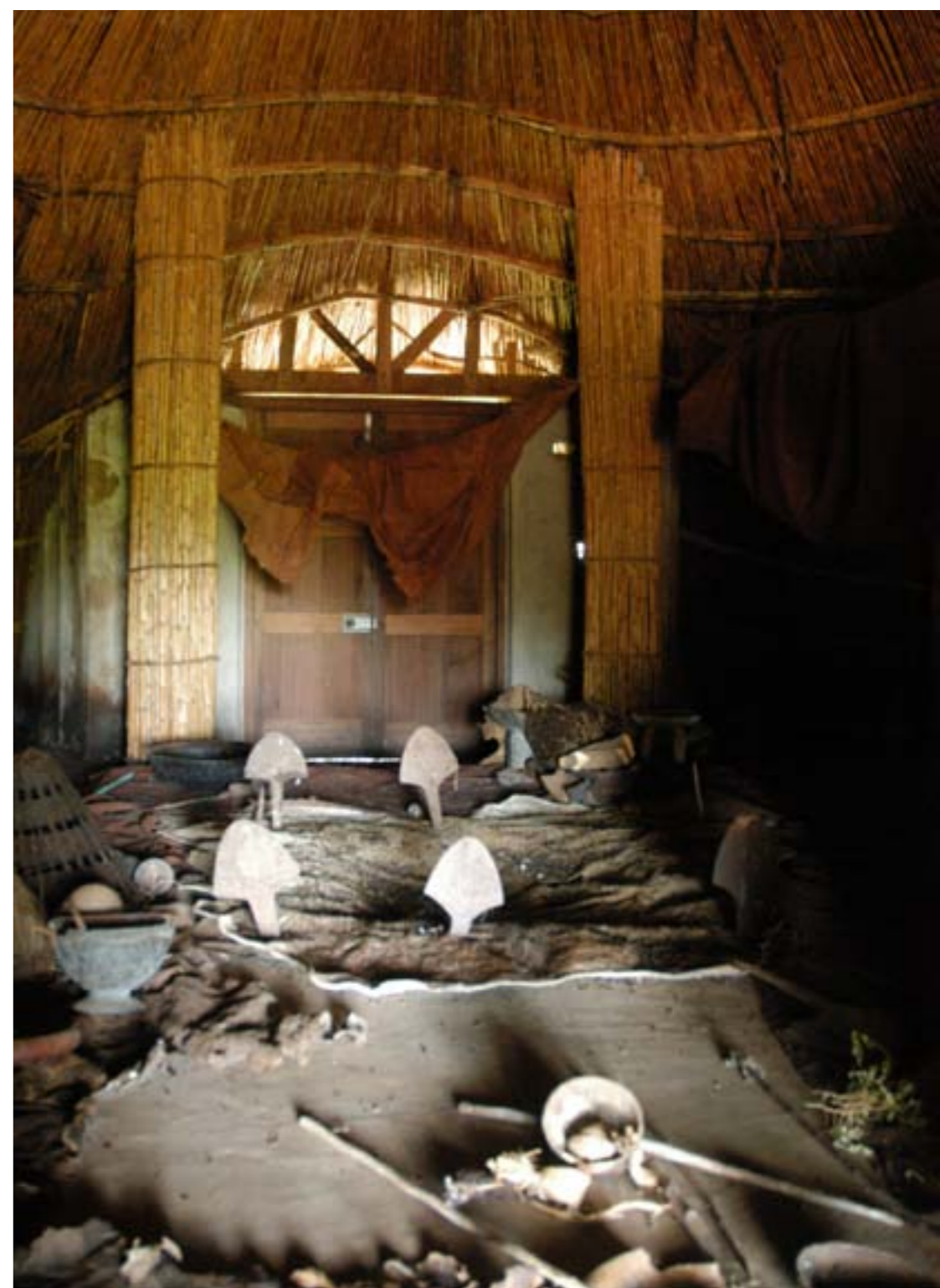
(Left)

A plaque on the site where Omukama Kabalega was laid.



(Right)

Interesting to note is that one of the tomb guards is a bull that aggressively protects their fallen kings' tombs.



(Right & Left)
The exterior and interior of one of the tombs.



(Left)
A few of the late kings' favorite items.



*(Left)
An excited 'Runyeye' dancer.*

'Runyeye' is a popular dance performed mostly on royal occasions and other cultural gatherings.



*(Left)
Royal regalia on display as the caretaker looks on.*



*(Right and Left)
Some of the royal regalia displayed*





Tooro King's Palace in Fort Portal

A spin-off of the great Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom is Toro Kingdom which is currently headed by King Oyo Nyimba Kabamba Iguru Rukidi IV. He is the youngest ruling monarch in the world. This, however, does not diminish his stature and importance among Tooro people. According to official oral history, Prince Olimi Kaboyo Kasunsunkwanzi, son of the king of Bunyoro Kingdom, annexed the southern province of his father's kingdom and declared himself king of this land, known as Toro. He was warmly received and accepted by Batooro, who accepted him as Rukirabasajja Omukama Kaboyo Olimi I.



Lake Wabike

Magnificent scenery around lake Wabike in Fort Portal

Nyakasura Hill

A breathtaking view of the Nyakasura Hill.
The valleys are taken up by various crater lakes on which one can take canoe rides.



Lake Saaka

From Lake Saaka, you get spectacular view of Rwenzori Mountains in a distance.



Lake Baram

Another of Fort Portal's captivating crater lakes.



Amabeere ga Nyinamwiiru

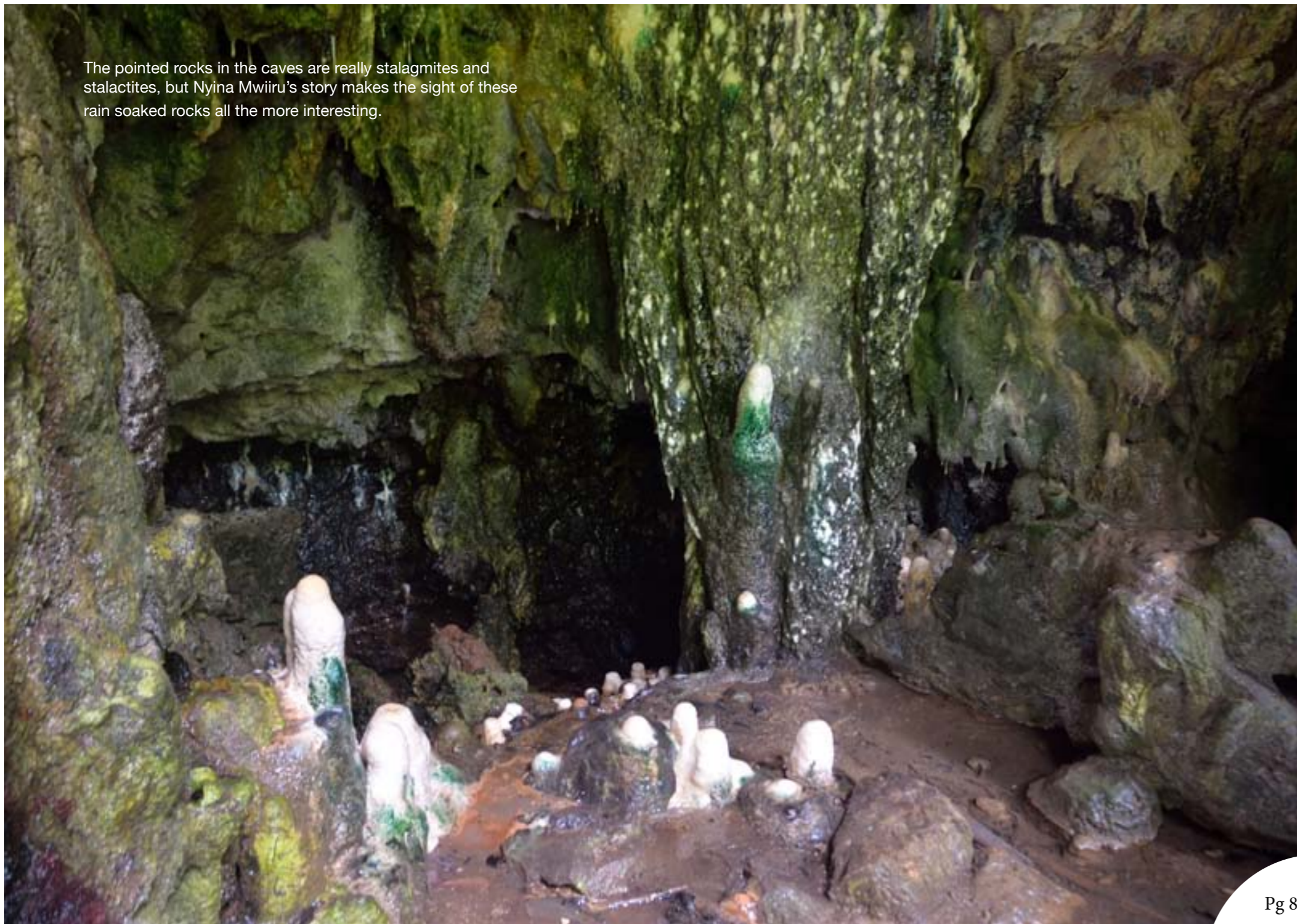
Not far from Fort Portal town, visitors can enter a set of damp caves that tell a sad story.

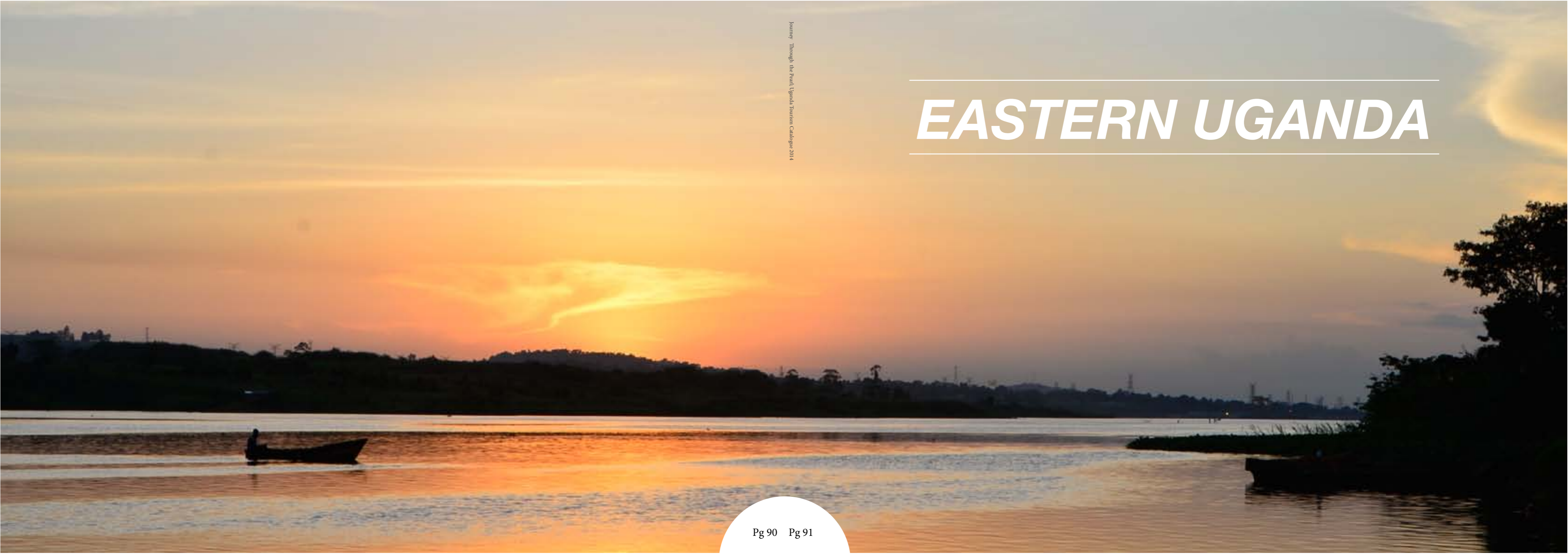
Bukuku was a very rich man. He served as a chief in the legendary Batembuzi dynasty that are the current Babiito kings of Tooro and Bunyoro kingdoms.

Bukuku had a beautiful daughter named, Nyina Mwiiru who fled the family homestead after her father refused to give his blessing for her to marry the man she loved.

Out of sheer anger and frustration, Nyina Mwiiru sliced off her breasts. The spot where she did this is where the caves now stand.

The pointed rocks in the caves are really stalagmites and stalactites, but Nyina Mwiiru's story makes the sight of these rain soaked rocks all the more interesting.





EASTERN UGANDA

Overview

Eastern Uganda is widely known for the vast plantations of sugarcane, some tea and paddies of rice.

The Basoga, whose society is also rooted in kingly rule, occupy much of the region. But further east and north east, the Bagisu, and Iteso predominate. Other smaller ethnic people are interspaced in the region.

But while Basoga and Bagisu are mostly farmers, the rest have a strong affinity to cattle rearing.

The region takes up the wide plain that gently slopes down from the Elgon mountain in the far east down to Kampala. This was the main trade route from the East African coast. Consequently, human traffic was far more evident here than other parts of Uganda.

The demand for animal curios, especially ivory, decimated much of the wildlife in the region while herds retreated to safer areas, like the slopes of Mount Elgon, smaller animals sought the protection of the forests. These included monkeys and baboons.

Along the highway to Kenya, its common to see baboons scavenging for food.

Like the Central region, the East is not bountiful in terms of wildlife. However, some places like the Sipi Falls, the Sigulu Rocks, the Elgon

area and of course, the attractions along River Nile, are not found anywhere else in Uganda.

The region takes up the wide plain that gently slopes down from the Elgon mountain in the far east down to Kampala. This was the main trade route from the East African coast.





River Nile and Jinja

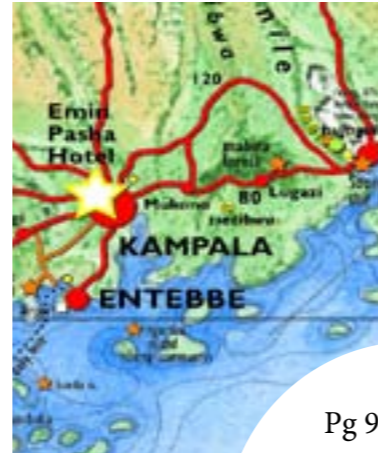
Jinja is about 50 kilometres from Kampala. Arrival at Jinja means crossing the Nile, the longest river in the world. It also means spills and thrills are nearby.

If getting gloriously wet is not to your taste, there are enjoyable alternatives. Try quad biking, bungee jumping, water rafting and horseback riding.

At adrift, they will provide you with an absolutely exciting experience and safety requirements to make sure you never forget the Nile.

Golden sunset over River Nile Jinja

River Nile is about 80km east of Kampala



*(Left)
Mahatma Ghandi's
Monument.*

Not long after his release from prison, Nelson Mandela came to pay homage at the site where Mahatma Gandhi's ashes were scattered here near the source of the River Nile.



*(Right)
Boat ride on River Nile.*

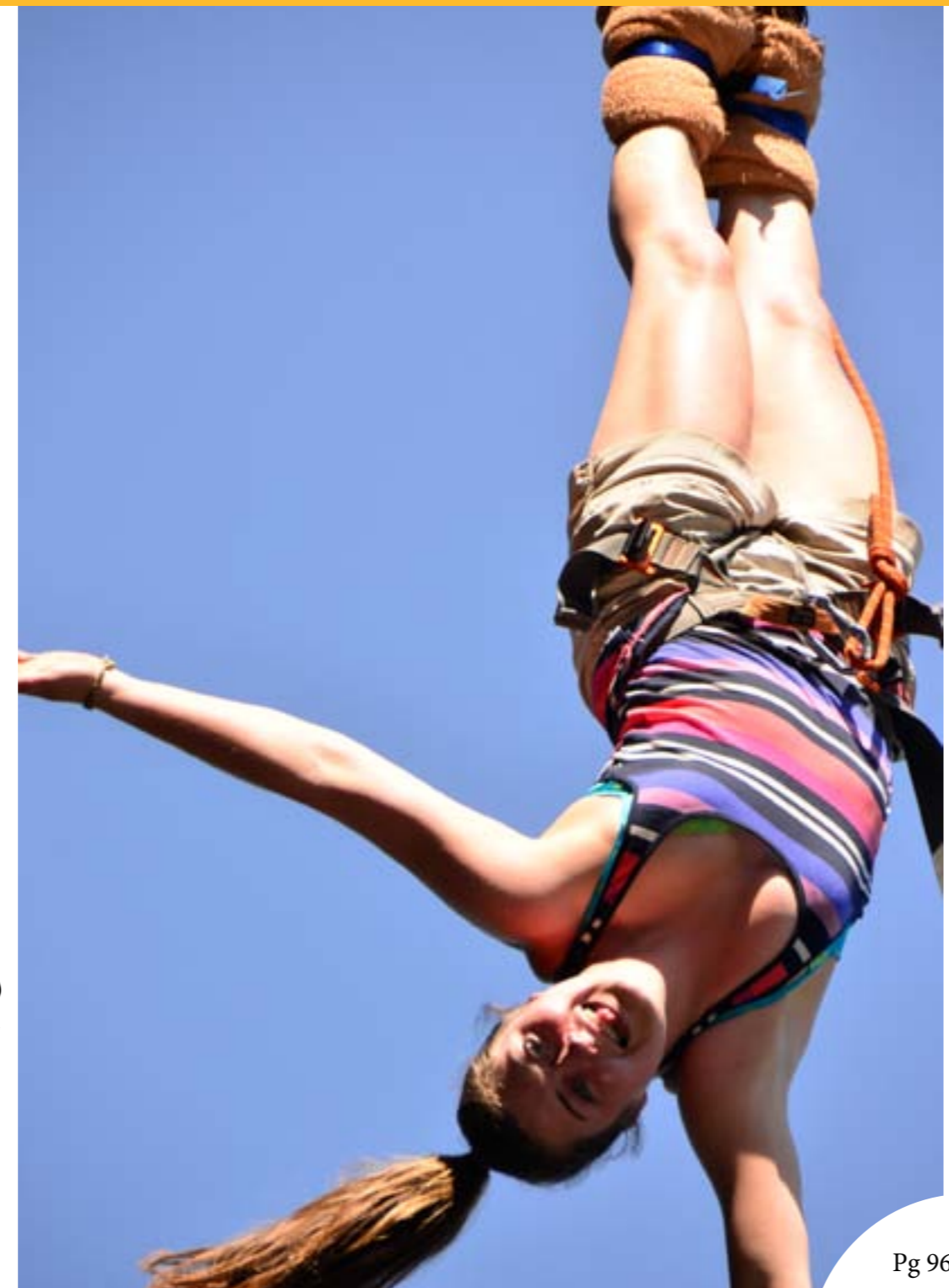
A boat ride can soothe your nerves while you gather the strength to be more adventurous.



(Left)
Tourists having a thrill
at the Nile's bungee
jumping area.

Take a step into the unknown;
nothing beats bungee jumping.
Usually, the first terrifying
screams end in victorious roars
of triumph. No doubt you will
want to do it again and again.

(Right)
Bungee jumper.



(Left)
Quad biking.

(Right)
Horse riding by the
Nile- Jinja.



Rafting in the topsy-turvy
waters is another exhilarating
way to prove your mettle.

(Right) Tourists catching a
break after a horseback ride.





Road through Mabira Forest

Mabira Forest

Mabira is the biggest rain forest in Central Uganda. At first, it doesn't look much; just another forest straddling the highway. Not until you venture deeper and underneath the canopy of tree branches, does it strike you at the abundance of biodiversity found here. Forest guides will happily tell you there are just over 300 bird species, an equal number of tree species, some 200 varieties of butterflies, nearly 100 species of moths and plenty of monkeys.



(Top) Vavet Monkey in Mabira Forest (Above) Rain Forest Lodge in Mabira Forest.



(Right) Snake having lunch.

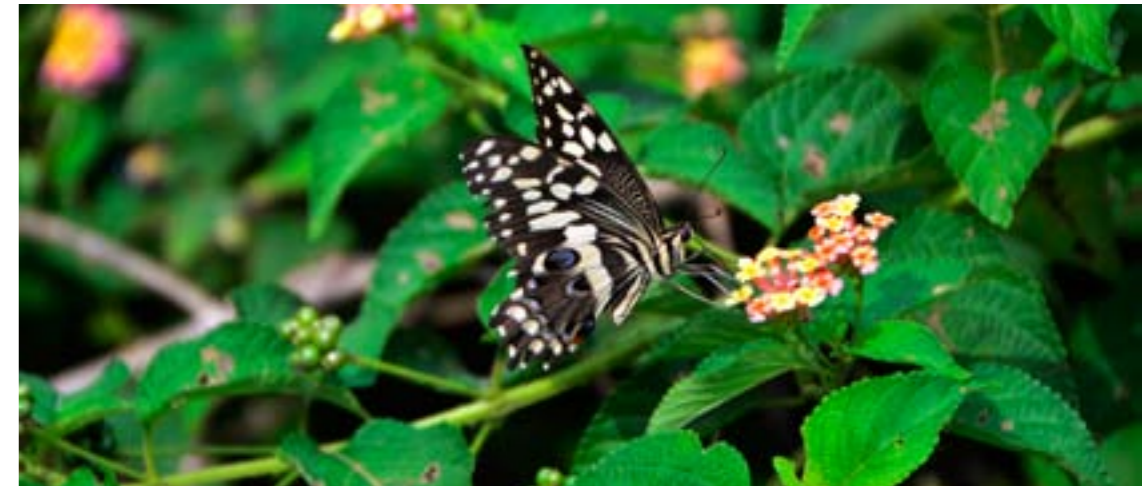
The Rain Forest Lodge is intertwined with Mabira. It does not intrude, because most of the construction materials are from the forest itself.

Everything about the lodge and its services is intended to leave a minimal footprint of human presence. In this way, guests can easily enmesh themselves fully with the forest and what it has to offer.



(Left) Butterfly Catcher.

Butterfly catchers will literally have a field day dashing about with their nets.





Mount Elgon

Third Sipi Falls.

Mt. Elgon is an extinct volcano about 250 kilometres east of Kampala on the border between Uganda and Kenya. The national park offers visitors sightings of elephants and buffalos especially on the lower slopes. Other wildlife include antelopes and monkeys.

At 4000 square kilometres, Mt. Elgon has the largest volcanic base in the world. According to park wardens, over 300 species of birds, including the endangered Lammergeyer can also be seen in the thick forests that circle the peak. The mountain is not difficult to climb, but hikers can also check out the vast caves, waterfalls, cliffs, caves and gorges. During the night, animals frequently converge to lap up the natural salt by licking it from the cave walls.



(Left)
Tourists enjoying the experience.

(Right) Second Sipi falls seen from the cave.



(Right)
Dusk over the plains as seen from Mt Elgon.





(Left)
Second Sipi falls
seen from the road to
Kapchorwa.

Mt Elgon is home to two tribes, the Bagisu and the Sabiny, with the marginalized Ndorobos forced to dwell deep within the forest of Benet. The Bagisu, also known as the BaMasaba, consider Mount Elgon to be the embodiment of their founding father Masaba and refer to the mountain by this name.

(Right)
Kapchorwa landscape.



(Right)
A boy at the entrance to
one of the caves at the
second Sipi Falls.

(Right)
Young Sebei woman
picking coffee as part of
Noah's Ark Coffee circle
experience.

The volcanic soils allow the Elgon region to produce the finest Uganda Arabica coffee.



(Right)
Preparing coffee
for a great cup.





Nyero Rock Paintings

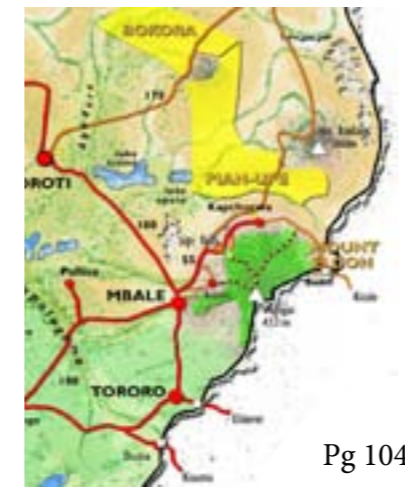
In Kumi District to the North East of Kampala, is where visitors can admire art works from a distant past. The site is composed of three-tiered rock shelters. It is also common to find people, both from far and near, holding traditional rituals at this place of caves and overhanging cliffs.

The Nyero Rock paintings are dated as being between 600 and 650 years old. The drawings apparently tell a story in the most intricate manner. Unfortunately, no one has been able to understand exactly what it all means. Perhaps you can.

All however agree that the people who crafted these paintings were of high intelligence. The importance of these drawings led to this place being designated a UNESCO Heritage Site in 1997.



It is about 5hrs's drive from Kampala to Kumi and about 8km from Kumi to the Nyero rocks.



It is believed by many that there is supernatural power that one can harness to influence one's fate for the better.

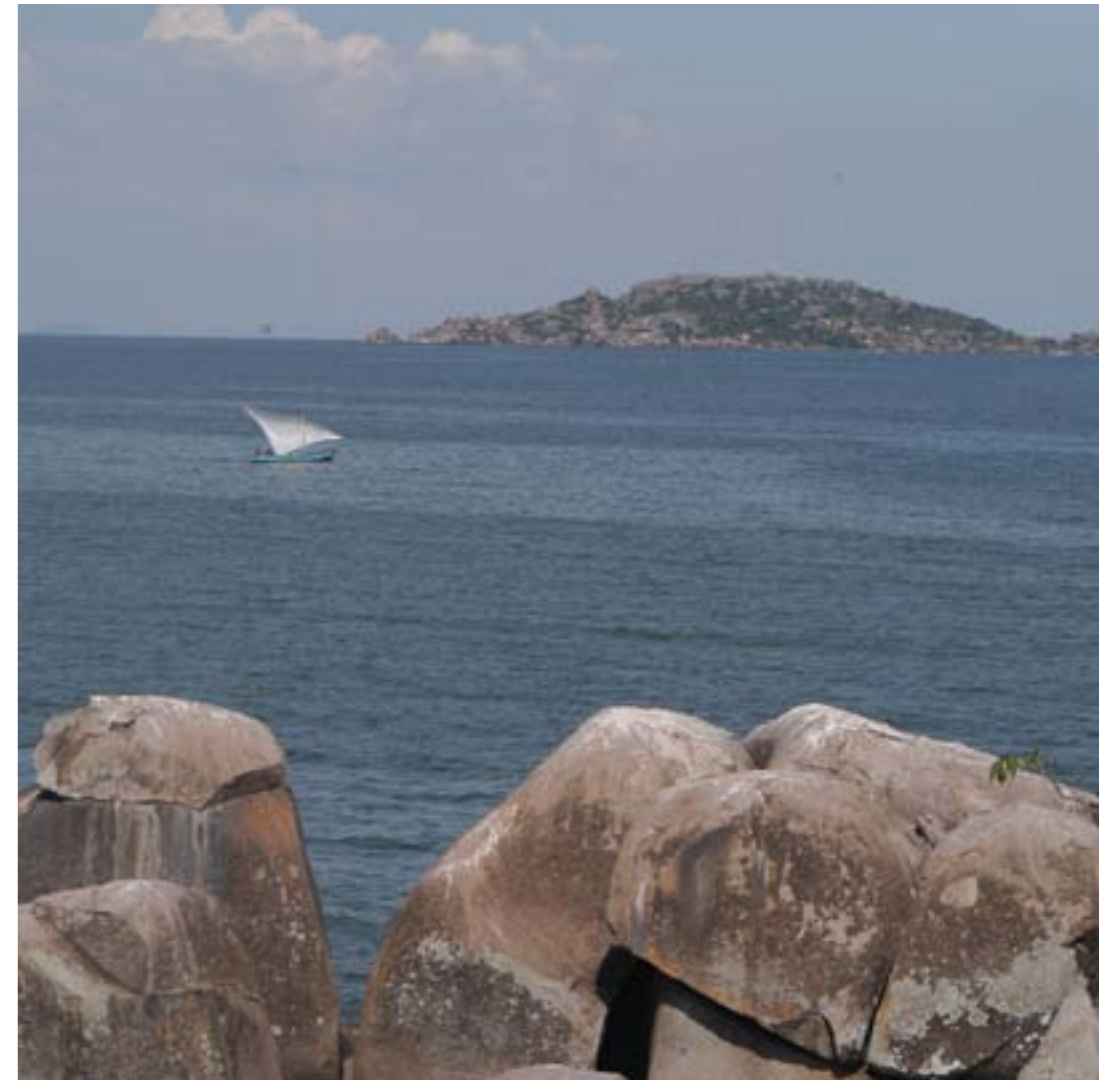




Dolwe Island

You cannot visit Eastern Uganda without taking a trip to Dolwe Island on Lake Victoria. Rocks in various sizes, piled high, are the main attractions here. That may not seem unusual.

However, what strikes the visitor to Dolwe Island is the symmetry to this scattered jumble of granite that conveys a predetermined design. It is as if during ancient times, the gods were involved in an ambitious construction that went awry or was rudely interrupted.



No wonder people come to pay homage, because the scene is tinged with an irrepressible reverence.

A self-appointed guardian who resides on the island claims there are almost 40 gods residing in the rocks of Dolwe.

He is always pleased when visitors ask about the folklore of the place, which fishermen believe is a source of a good catch once you pay tribute.



Mbale District

Mbale district has the distinction of being featured in the highly successful James Bond movie, Casino Royale. True, the filming crew actually did not come here, but several millions across the world will now know the name "Mbale". Mbale was once referred to as the 'cleanest town in East Africa' but residents would be the first to admit those heady days are a distant memory. Nevertheless, Mbale is still the centre of Uganda's Arabica coffee industry.

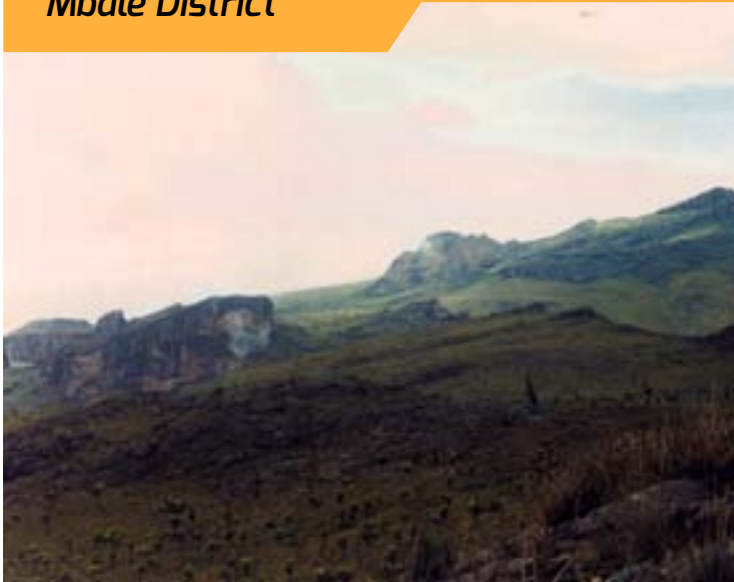
(Above) Passengers aboard a truck to Mbale town with impressive scenery in the background.



(Left) The winding road through Mbale's hilly terrain.

(Right) An amazing sunset view.





Bagisu and Bamasaba are the dominant people in this picturesque region where Mount Elgon towers with such authority.

Bagisu call Elgon 'Masaba' and believe their great ancestor Mundu and Sera emerged from the a hole in the mountain. Atop this former active volcano, lies a huge depression or caldera and the surrounding area is taken up by several hot springs.

(Left) Women carrying 'matooke' to the market at dawn



This is hilly country and ideal for long hikes and camping expeditions in the lush forests on the slopes of Elgon.





The 'Imbalu' Ceremony

For Bagisu of Mbale district, the definition of being a 'man' is not debatable. You must undergo traditional circumcision in ceremonies that take place every two years. The snip is quick and done without anesthesia. However, the dancing and singing that takes place in the run-up to the actual cut is what makes 'Imbalu' so special for Bagisu.

Amidst a steady drum-beat counting down the time before they become men, candidates are proudly herded about for all to see. The pace is frenetic while dancing the Kadodi. There is no rest as the atmosphere reaches a fever pitch.

(Above) Initiates dancing to the famous 'kadodi' dance shortly before facing the knife.



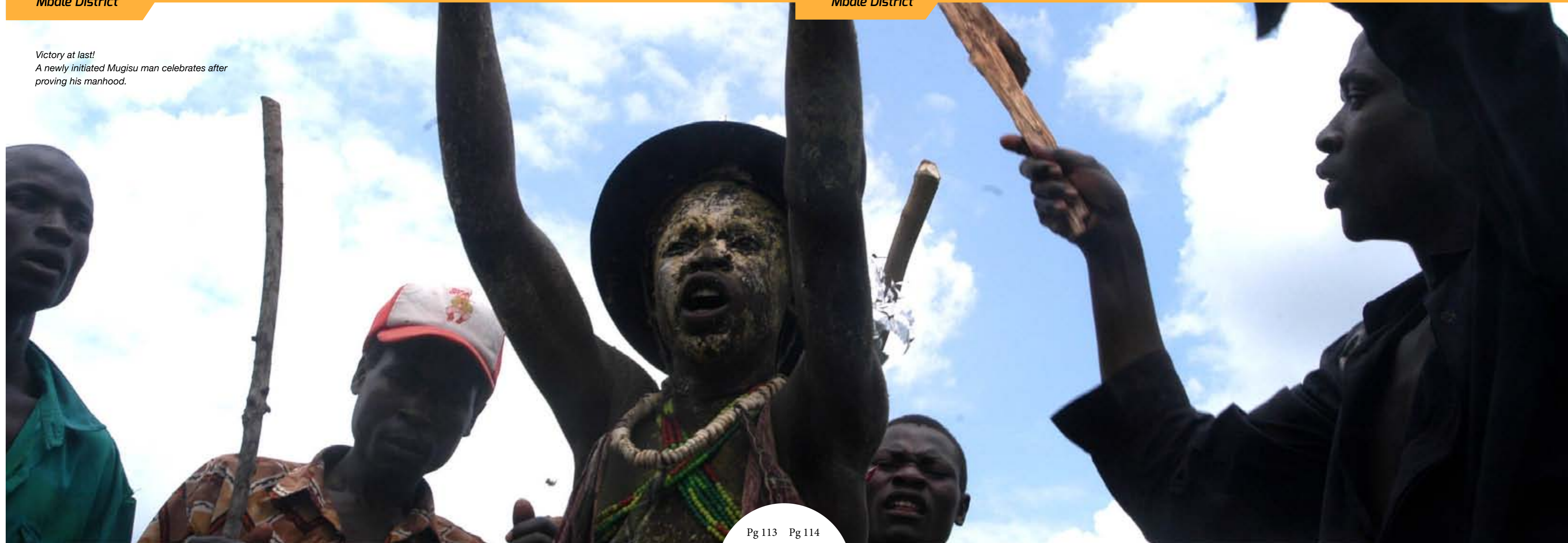
The ancestors are not forgotten during this celebration to manhood. As the candidates head to the special place for the circumcision, beer (malwa) is poured on the ground so that they too, can share in the event and give their blessings.

Sharp whistles herald the coming of the candidates while enthusiastic crowds encourage the candidates not to show any fear before being splattered with mud and taken before the knife.

For health reasons, many quarters of society want Imbalu modified, but for the men who have undergone the traditional cut, it is perhaps their greatest pride and joy.



*Victory at last!
A newly initiated Mugisu man celebrates after
proving his manhood.*





NORTHERN UGANDA



Overview

A decade ago, traveling in Northern Uganda was not for the faint hearted. These days it is the place to be. In 2013, thousands were streaming across Karuma Bridge along the Kampala- Gulu highway in great haste. They were heading for Pakwach, (not far from Gulu town), to find an ideal spot to watch the total solar eclipse but there are other things to experience in the North apart from looking up at the sky. You can re-trace the steps of famous British explorer, army officer and big game hunter, Sir Samuel Baker.

The Acholi and Langi people cannot wait to greet you and give you a taste of the best sim-sim paste in the world. It goes very well with millet dough and fish. History tells us that the Acholi people originated from South Sudan before developing into a socio-hierarchical system ruled over by a chief. However, the folklore surrounding their origins is more colourful and fascinating to hear and there is no shortage of story-tellers.

Northern Uganda is now one of the most popular destinations for those in search of something new and exciting. It is here where you can also gauge the thunderous power of the River Nile. Lying between the two great Rift Valleys, this region of Uganda is a huge flat plain covered in vast expanses of savanna and low woodlands.

The horizons are seemingly endless, but no less inspiring for what you will see.

This is the terrain for big herds like elephants and African Buffalos. In their midst, you will also encounter the elegant giraffe, safe in its storied heights, but ready to provide a friendly warning at any sign of a predator. Best of all, you can leisurely view the 'Big Five' and more in Murchison Falls National Park. The park was first gazetted in 1952 but generally its boundaries have been kept intact.

There are camps and lodges to suit your every need and leave you with memories to last a lifetime. The 1951 Oscar winning movie '*African Queen*' was filmed here.





Murchison Falls National Park

Uganda's largest national park (nearly 4000 square metres) takes its name from a narrow descending gap. This is where water from Lake Victoria literally thunders out to drop nearly 50 metres to become the slow moving Nile that divides the Park in half on the way to the Mediterranean Sea. Often referred to as Kabalega Falls, (in honour of the great King of Bunyoro), the sound is deafening. Endless sprays of water sting at the face even as your head gets pounded with the rhythm. It is easy to become emotional at the Falls.

The spectacle is a glorious tribute to the forces of nature or perhaps Kabalega's anger against the British colonialists.

The park is situated approximately 300 kilometres (190 mi), by road, northwest of Kampala, Uganda's capital city.



They may not look very friendly, but the African Buffalo is one of the most social animals of the plains.

Today, these river cruises have become an essential part of visiting Murchison Falls experience. This is a wonderful way to see hippos, buffaloes and crocodiles at their ease.

(Right)
Tourists enjoying a boat ride to the bottom of the falls



Crocodiles can never complain about lack of food as they marauder the river banks. When their mouths are open, it doesn't mean you're next on the menu. It is simply a way to release excess heat.

(Right)
Tourists in a luxury boat

The bird life never ceases to surprise and there are over 450 species to look out for.

(Left)
Red breasted bee-eater.





(Left)
The Egyptian Goose.

With their frequently loud chirping sounds, most tropical birds have vibrant colours which only add to their graceful movements as they streak across the skies.



(Left)
Butterflies.

Lucky visitors can watch as butterflies emerge from their chrysalides, dry their wings and prepare for their very first flight. The whole lifecycle from egg to adult can take about three weeks for some species.



(Left)
Saddle-billed stock.

The tallest mammal on earth spends most of its life standing and no two giraffes have the same spot pattern. Efforts are paying off.

(Right)
Giraffes at the delta.



(Left)
Elephants crossing the road at Paraa.

(Right)
A tourist photographs an elephant at Chobe safari lodge .

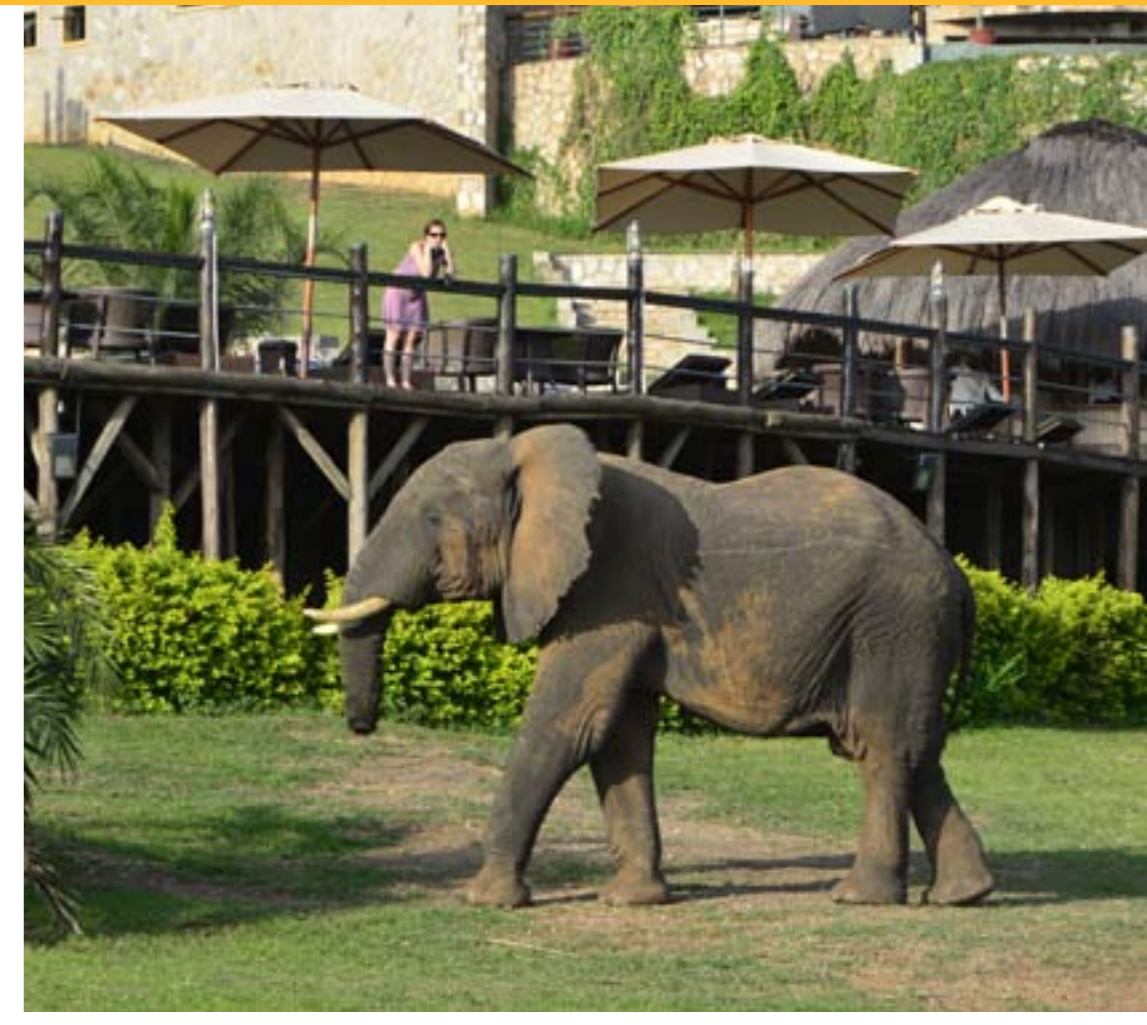
The Hippo will probably never win any awards for great beauty or grace but as a top attraction along the river, it never fails to impress.

More often than not, Hippos spend most of their time in water. However, when it gets dark, they like to lumber onto shore and graze on their favourite meal which is grass. Some eat upwards of 60 kilogrammes each night.

Hippopotamuses are territorial only in water. It makes them very aggressive when you get too close.

(Right)
Uganda kobs.

(Left)
Hippo yawning at Chobe.





The celebration of life is a constant at Murchison even as mothers are very wary of the presence of predators.

(Left)
Jackson's Hartebeest with her calf.

(Right)
Lions resting near Pakuba.



(To the Right)

Some singing around the camp fire helps with digestion and warms up the spirits when the nights get a bit chilly.

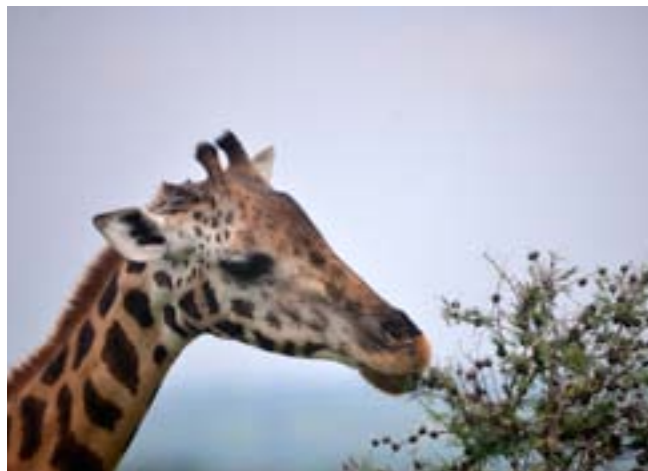


The kobs resemble the impalas, but are more active and springy, as if determined to impress watchers with their gracefulness.



Many visitors would secretly wish to see lions hunting. It's a rare privilege. That's because lions laze about during the day and prefer hunting at night.

(Left)
Ox pecker taking a free ride on a warthog's back.



When giraffes decide to neck, it is best to keep your distance. It is not always a male and a female in loving embrace. Often it is two bucks fighting to see who is number one.

(Left)
Giraffe nibbling on acacia.



(Left)
Tourist a top Murchison falls.

(Right)
Oribis; the smallest antelope.





Ziwa Rhino Sanctuary

At the Ziwa Rhino Sanctuary, located on the southern end of Murchison Falls, you can go for canoe rides and nature walks but obviously the main draw is Rhino trekking.

In 2005, Rhino Fund Uganda was set up to pay for re-establishing this animal back into the natural habitat. Previously, poachers had decimated them close to extinction. During the past 10 years, well-wishers have been contributing money to also support a breeding programme.



The sanctuary is located approximately 180 kilometres by road north of Kampala. This location is in Nakasongola District, in the Kafu River Basin, off the Kampala-Gulu Highway.



Kidepo Valley National Park

During the dry season, Kidepo can be dull and dreary. It is located towards the Northeast corner of Uganda, some 500 odd kilometres from Kampala. The park consists of the two major valley systems of the Kidepo and Narus Rivers. The plains can often be harsh and forbidding. A gust of winds will shift dust from one part of the park to the other while the wildlife jostles about for water sources. However, when the rains are plentiful, this lowland area bristles with life. Once water is assured, herds will roam with complete abandon.

In the 1960s, great herds of giraffe were common here, but today it is the buffalo, antelope and zebra that hold sway. Poachers and war did their terrible bit. Kidepo may not be as glamorous as other parks in Uganda, but it is the one place where all of Uganda's wildlife come together in the truest sense of the word.



Kidepo Valley national park is located towards the Northeast corner of Uganda, some 500 odd kilometres from Kampala.





(Right)
Leopard tortoise.



(Right)
Waterbuck at Apoka.



(Right)
Jackson's Hartebeest.



(Left)
Jackal at Apoka.



(Left) Silver bird.

A game drive puts you as close to the animals as possible without endangering your safety.



The warthogs would have loved to join them but human tastes are not their cup of tea.





Fort Patiko in Gulu

By all accounts, Sir Samuel Baker was a larger than life character. His colourful experiences in the second half of the 19th century happened across northern Uganda, skirting the Congo border and into southern Sudan. He was like Indiana Jones.

To add some spice to these intrepid adventures was the presence of his wife, Lady Florence. Fort Patiko in Gulu district, is one of Baker's enduring monuments to those swashbuckling days.

This British engineer, explorer, army officer and big-game hunter, had an appetite for doing the impossible and Patiko still gets admirers today.

(Above) Ruins of what used to be Fort Patiko.

A tourist at the site.





The Karamojong Peoples

In North East is Karamoja district. This is the home of the Karamojong. They evolved from one of the many Nilotic bands that slowly drifted down from Ethiopia about 500 years ago. Legend has it that they were too exhausted to continue any further. The name 'Karamojong' is derived from 'ekar ngimojong', meaning 'the old men can walk no farther'. Settling around Mount Moroto, the Karamojong gradually moved into the outlying flatlands intent on searching for pasture. It is no secret that these tall, rangy men are fiercely possessive of their cattle nor are they adverse at being envious of others' as well. It is just part of their genetic make-up.

It explains why neighbours find Karamojong so intimidating. It is also the main reason many misconceptions are unfairly lumped on these hardy people who often have to survive in very harsh climatic conditions.

(Above)
Karamojong love to dance but the 'jumping dance' is their specialty and probably their favourite. It consists of taking successively higher springs into the air in time with a backing chorus. The effortlessness involved, is what makes the 'jumping dance' so thrilling to watch.



A beautiful young Karamojong girl clad in cultural wear.



(Left) A native.

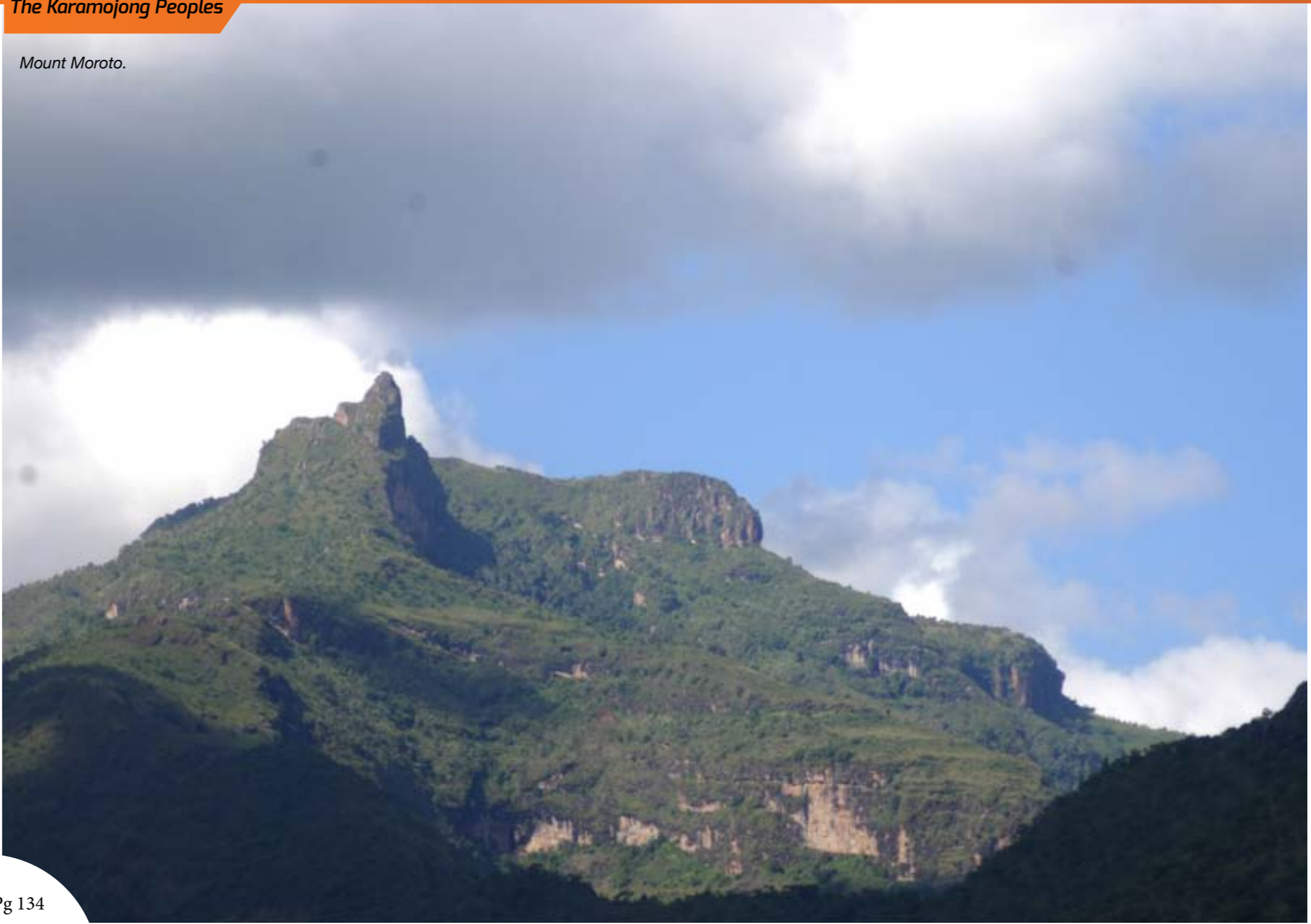
Facial markings are common, but some Karamojong are beginning to give in to the dictates of modernity by rejecting them. The markings are a means of identification passed down from family to family, members of the same village and so on.

In other circumstances ,the elaborate pin-pricks, strokes and circles can also be seen as a form of beautification. The expression, beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder has never been etched so clearly!

(Right)
A young Karamojong woman.



Mount Moroto.





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