

Call of the Congo: Saving Virunga's Gorillas

DAY BY DAY ITINERARY

*gorilla and chimpanzee safari
group departure*



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Gorilla and Chimpanzee Safari

Remote and ruggedly beautiful, Virunga National Park stands among the world's most exotic destinations. The park is home to about half of the world's mountain gorilla population. It is the ideal place to get close to mountain gorillas in their natural habitat. Virunga hosts 218 mammal species, 703 bird species, 109 species of reptiles and over 2,000 species of plants. This adds up to a biodiversity greater than any other protected area in Africa.

The landscape of Virunga is stunningly beautiful with majestic peaks (one of the highest mountain ranges in Africa), live volcanoes and tropical forests. This is Africa's oldest national park covering 3,000 square miles of pristine wilderness. Until a few years ago, Virunga was all but inaccessible to the outside world. But today the park has resurged with the help of an array of international supporters, the development of an internationally trained ranger force, and increased stabilization in the area. Privately guided by English speaking guides, this safari makes one of the world's most exciting destinations safe and accessible to international travelers.



Photo credit: Fiona Rogers

SAFARI SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

DAY	TRAVEL/ACTIVITY	LOCATION	ACCOMMODATION
August 16:	Arrive in Kigali	Kigali, Rwanda	Heaven Hotel
August 17:	Drive to Mikeno Lodge	Virunga National Park, DRC	Mikeno Lodge
August 18:	Drive to Bukima Tented Camp	Virunga National Park, DRC	Bukima Tented Camp
August 19-20:	Drive to Mikeno Lodge	Virunga National Park, DRC	Mikeno Lodge
August 21:	Drive to Nyiragongo	Virunga National Park, DRC	Nyiragongo Volcano Summit Shelters
August 22:	Drive to Kigali for international flights		

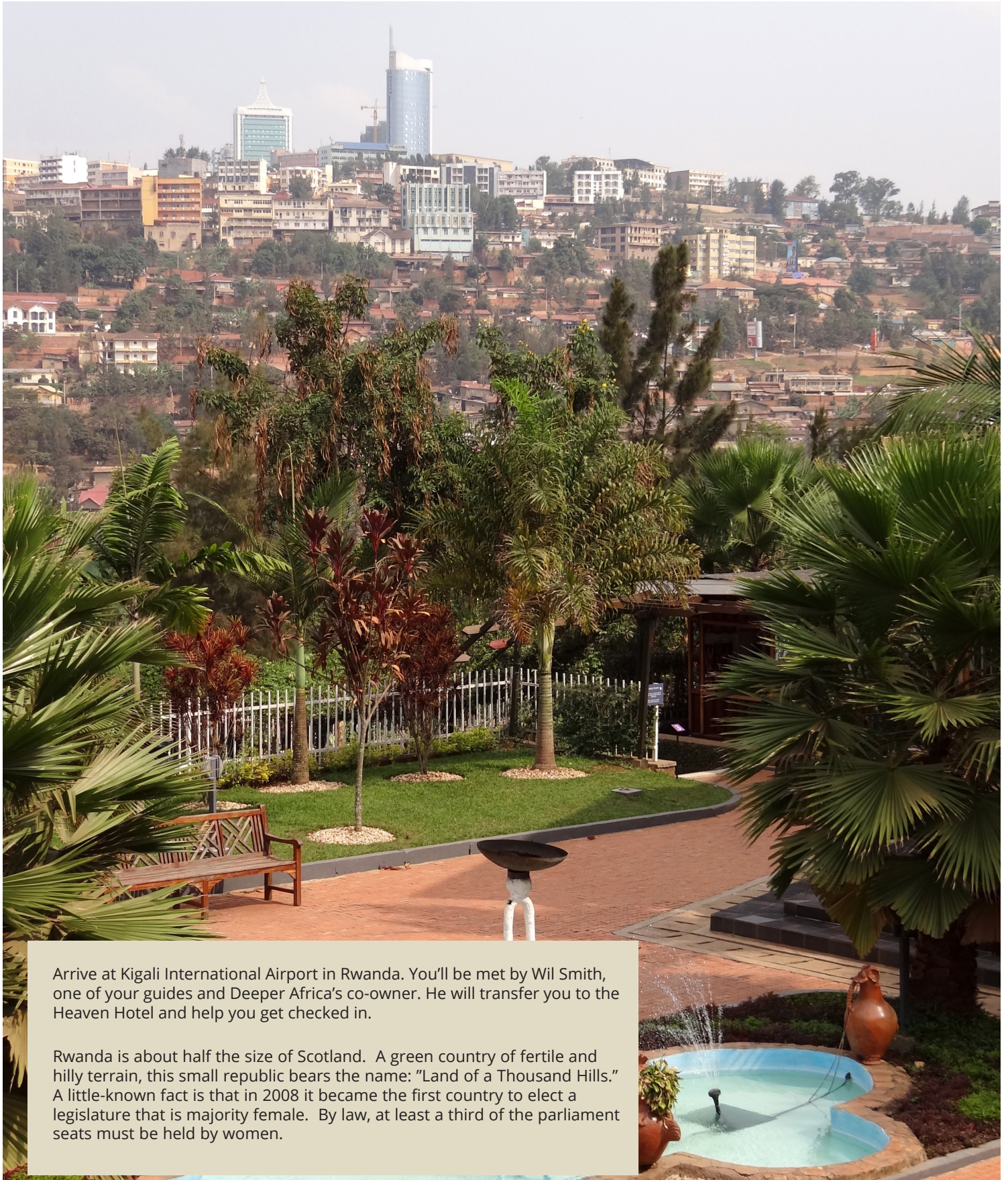
INTERNATIONAL FLIGHT #1

- Departs: TBD
- Arrives: TBD

INTERNATIONAL FLIGHT #2

- Departs: TBD
- Arrives: Kigali, Rwanda

Photo credit: Adam Kiefer



Arrive at Kigali International Airport in Rwanda. You'll be met by Wil Smith, one of your guides and Deeper Africa's co-owner. He will transfer you to the Heaven Hotel and help you get checked in.

Rwanda is about half the size of Scotland. A green country of fertile and hilly terrain, this small republic bears the name: "Land of a Thousand Hills." A little-known fact is that in 2008 it became the first country to elect a legislature that is majority female. By law, at least a third of the parliament seats must be held by women.

Photo credit: Rwanda Tourism



EXPERIENCES

- Meet the anti-poaching Congo Hounds
- Village visits

INCLUDED

Breakfast
Lunch
Dinner
Laundry

From Kigali, a scenic drive through the green hills of rural Rwanda takes you past villages, farms, and forests arriving three hours later in the Rwandan city of Gisenyi on Lake Kivu, one of Africa's Great Lakes. Obtain your visa and pass into the Democratic Republic of Congo and the bustling town of Goma. From there it's a two-hour drive to Virunga National Park passing volcanoes and towering mountains along the way.

Photo credit: Paul Taggart



EXPERIENCES

- Trekking

INCLUDED

Breakfast
Lunch
Dinner
Laundry

After breakfast the rangers will brief you on gorilla trekking, including an overview of gorilla culture and useful tips on politeness and protocols in the gorilla world. Your small group sets out on foot led by rangers and trackers deeply attuned to gorilla behavior. It's a vigorous hike that will take from three to five hours — passing through open farmlands then up and down hills through dense jungle. The colors are intense — the deepest greens, shot through with light. Your reward is to join a gorilla family for a spellbound hour. Return to camp for a late lunch and a hot shower. Evenings in Bukima are enjoyed around a campfire. On a clear night the star-gazing is unsurpassed, and you can see the orange glow from the churning lava lake in Mt Nyirangongo.

Photo credit: Virunga National Park



The morning brings another trek to visit a different gorilla family. Each has its own personality. Transfer to Mikeno Lodge where you can rest from the trekking in a spacious cottage with a fireplace and sitting room. Visit the famous Congo Hounds, Virunga's canine anti-poaching unit. Bloodhounds and springer spaniels make up the unit. The bloodhounds are experts at tracking down poachers and rescuing villagers who get lost in the forest. The spaniels specialize in finding caches of ivory and weapons. Once the spaniels find ivory or guns, the bloodhounds take over and find who it was that stashed the contraband. After the evening meal, enjoy a long conversation with Andre Bauma, the devoted caretaker of Virunga's orphan gorillas.

EXPERIENCES

- Trekking
- Meet the anti-poaching Congo Hounds
- Gorilla conservation presentation

INCLUDED

Breakfast
Lunch
Dinner
Laundry

WILDLIFE ENCOUNTERS

- Gorilla
- Blue monkey
- Red Tail monkey
- Angolan Colobus monkey
- Baboons
- Chimpanzees

Photo credit: Mikeno Lodge



Get an early start to explore the Mahura forest in search of chimpanzees. Your guides are a Congolese team trained by the Frankfurt Zoological Society in primate habituation. The team spends every day with the chimps, coaxing them to allow friendly visitors into their forest. Vocal and kinetic, chimps guarantee you will never forget an encounter. The first experience is often auditory. Hidden behind foliage, chimps defend their territory with a gigantic outcry of ferocious woofs and ululating screams. Often, new travelers panic and run, terrified by the monstrous noise. Press on and the excitement continues with jumping, swinging, climbing, resting, feeding and grooming.

Over the years, more than 150 rangers have given their lives defending the park, protecting the land and its wildlife from poachers. This afternoon we meet their widows at the Sewing Workshop, a women's cooperative established by the park that helps this tightly knit community of individuals connect, heal and support their families through the sale of artisanal linens.

INCLUDED

Breakfast
Lunch
Dinner
Laundry

Photo credit: Virunga National Park

Hike up Mount Nyiragongo and camp above the world's largest lava lake. A slow but difficult six-hour hike with your Deeper Africa guide, rangers, and porters gets you to the summit with a bird's eye view of the roaring glowing lava lake that grows brighter as daylight fades. Overnight in a rustic A-frame shelter, just a few feet from the crater rim. While this very challenging trek involves steep terrain, scrambling over rocks, intense exertion, cold weather, primitive facilities, and high altitude, the momentous experience is worth the effort. Do this hike only if you are physically fit and willing to rough it.

INCLUDED

Breakfast
Lunch
Dinner



Photo credit: Wil Smith

Descend the volcano in the morning. Today you depart Virunga for Kigali. Depart out of the Kigali International Airport.

INTERNATIONAL FLIGHT #1

- Departs: Kigali, Rwanda
- Arrives: TBD

INTERNATIONAL FLIGHT #2

- Departs: TBD
- Arrives: TBD

Photo credit: Brad Clement/Virunga National Park



GORILLA DOCTORS

The Mountain Gorilla Veterinary Project, also known as Gorilla Doctors, is dedicated to saving Mountain and Eastern Lowland (Grauer's) gorillas, one gorilla patient at a time. Gorilla Doctors' veterinary team provides hands-on medical care to ill and injured gorillas in Bwindi Impenetrable Forest (Uganda), Parc National des Volcans (Rwanda), and Virunga National Park (DRC). These gorillas are the only endangered animals in the world to receive regular veterinary care. Gorilla Doctors is an impressive conservation success story. The organization proves that our presence and your visits can change the future of an endangered species.

Learn more about Gorilla Doctors at: www.gorilladoctors.org.

Photo credit: Uganda Wildlife Authority

THE STORY OF VIRUNGA'S RANGERS

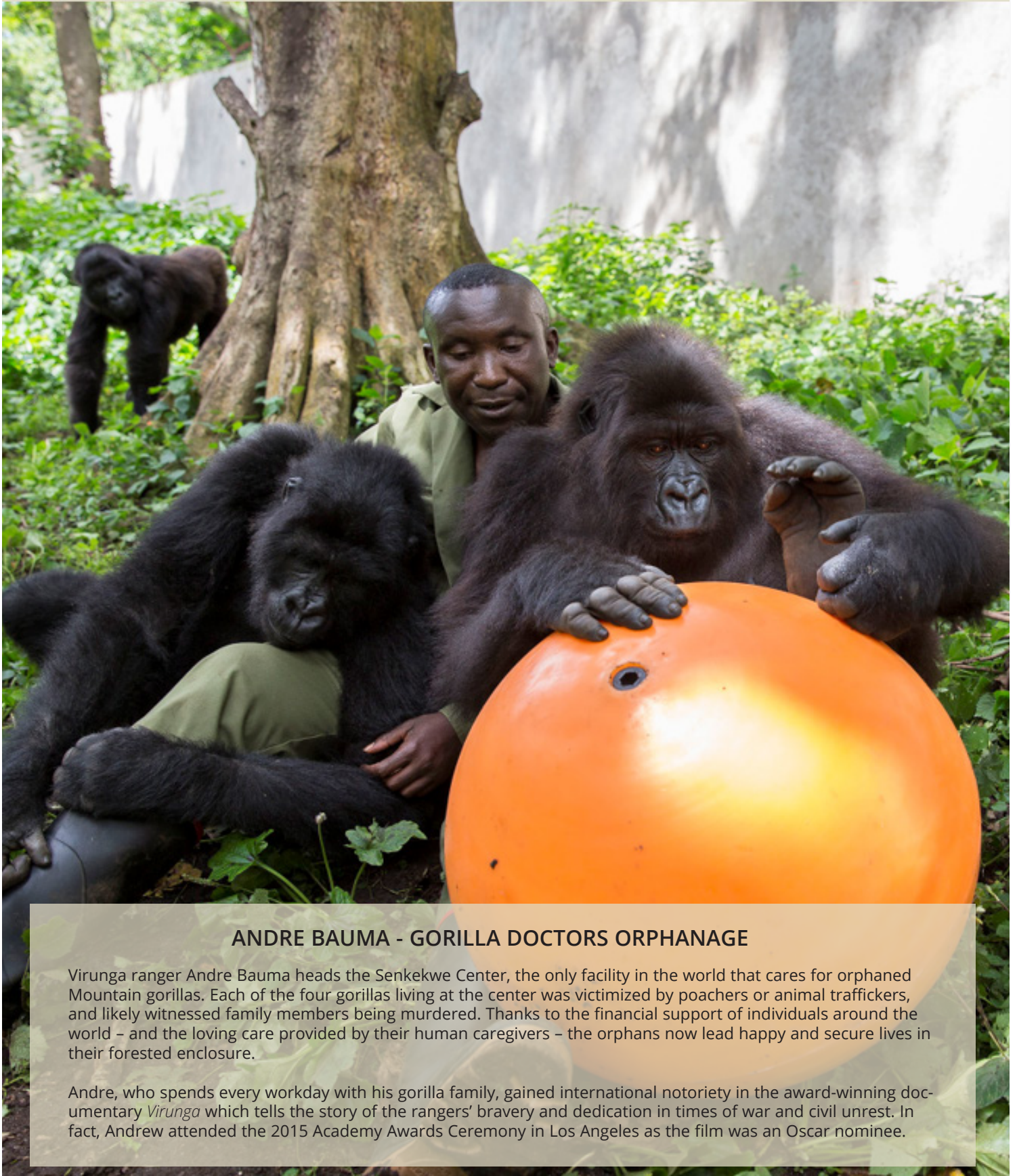


VIRUNGA'S RANGERS

During the civil war of the 1990s the Congolese government collapsed, and Virunga National Park was left unsecured and alone in a war zone. Virunga was under assault as invading armies and desperate refugees entered the park felling trees for firewood and killing wildlife for food. The Congolese army and all government officials abandoned the Eastern Congo and Virunga. Only Virunga's rangers remained, defending Virunga, its wildlife and gorillas, with no pay, scant food, and often without shoes to wear. Over 150 rangers lost their lives defending Virunga. The park and gorillas survive today because of the rangers' steadfast determination. The dedication of Virunga's rangers is steeped in history and tradition, a way of life since 1925 when the park was founded to protect mountain gorillas. Most of the rangers have fathers and grandfathers who served before them.

Today Virunga's rangers are the elite among wildlife protectors, well trained, well paid, and provided with state-of-the-art equipment. The rangers are trained by European special forces instructors. New recruits undergo many months of rigorous training, including training in VIP protection for the safety and security of park visitors. To date, 27 very tough women have passed the stringent selection process to become full-time rangers, one of whom is a section commander. The ranger force is growing and is now near 700 strong.

Photo credit: Wil Smith



ANDRE BAUMA - GORILLA DOCTORS ORPHANAGE

Virunga ranger Andre Bauma heads the Senkekwe Center, the only facility in the world that cares for orphaned Mountain gorillas. Each of the four gorillas living at the center was victimized by poachers or animal traffickers, and likely witnessed family members being murdered. Thanks to the financial support of individuals around the world – and the loving care provided by their human caregivers – the orphans now lead happy and secure lives in their forested enclosure.

Andre, who spends every workday with his gorilla family, gained international notoriety in the award-winning documentary *Virunga* which tells the story of the rangers' bravery and dedication in times of war and civil unrest. In fact, Andrew attended the 2015 Academy Awards Ceremony in Los Angeles as the film was an Oscar nominee.

Photo credit: Virunga National Park

VIRUNGA'S SUPPORTERS

A vast array of international organizations support and maintain Virunga National Park. Among them are:

THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT'S FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

The United States provides funding to support Virunga's conservation strategy and assists the widows and children of Virunga's fallen rangers.

THE CONGOLESE WILDLIFE AUTHORITY (ICCN)

The ICCN partners with the Virunga Foundation to manage and protect Virunga National Park. The ICCN enforces the government's wildlife protection laws. All of Virunga's rangers are ICCN officers.

THE VIRUNGA ALLIANCE

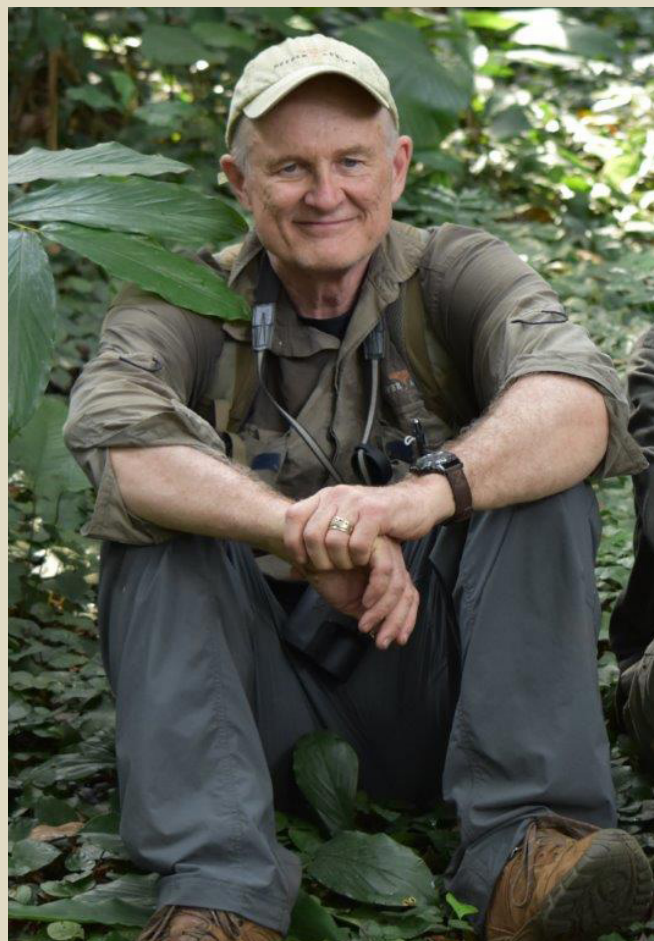
To a large extent poaching is driven by extreme poverty in a region that has suffered from years of warfare. As the region is stabilizing, the Alliance aims to promote peace and prosperity for the four million people who live within a day's walk from the park's borders. Described as "a Marshal Plan for Eastern Congo," the Alliance supports employment, education, and health services through community projects. In support of the Alliance, the Howard G. Buffett Foundation constructed three carbon-neutral hydro power facilities which have helped hundreds of jobs and new local businesses in communities surrounding the park.



VICTOR PRIGOGINE

Born in Goma, Victor grew up in the Virunga National Park where his father, easily the DRC's leading nature conservationist instrumental in developing the country's tourism industry, worked for more than 40 years. As well, Victor's grandfather was a renowned ornithologist who centered his studies in the Virunga National Park.

Victor has a passion for nature, particularly the Virunga ecosystem. While studying in Belgium, he was a guide at The Royal Museum for Central Africa or RMCA, a natural history museum located just outside Brussels. After completing his education in 2013, from the School of Oriental and African Studies, and Westminster University, he returned to the Virungas to move forward in his chosen career of wildlife guiding.



WIL SMITH

A life-long mountaineer who has summited Mount Kilimanjaro, Mount Meru and Mount Kenya, Wil first traveled to Africa 25 years ago and has been in love with it ever since, inspiring him to co-found Deeper Africa. Wil has organized rain forest & wildlife trekking tours in Borneo, and expeditions, walking safaris and camping adventures throughout southern and eastern Africa.

Wil has a special passion for gorilla trekking, working in both the Republic of Congo and the Democratic Republic of Congo in just the past year. His familiarity with wildlife in general, and lowland and mountain gorillas in particular, makes him well qualified to lead this group departure.

2020 Pricing: \$6,890

2020 Custom Pricing & Departures

Group Departure: August 16-22, 2020

- \$6,890 USD per person

All pricing is in US dollars. Arrivals and departures through Kigali, Rwanda. Prices do not include international airfare. Gorilla and chimpanzee permit prices & park fees fluctuate. All itineraries and prices are subject to change.

Call of the Congo safari includes:

- Start-to-finish safari expertise
- Accommodations in all lodges & tented camps
- All meals as specified in itinerary
- All gorilla & chimp permits, park fees and entrance fees
- Safari guide & private 4x4 Land Cruiser
- All in-country transportation
- Safe drinking water available at all times
- Enrollment with Flying Doctors Evacuation Service
- Beverages in your 4x4 safari vehicle
- Alcohol & beverages at some camps and lodges
- Laundry at some camps and lodges
- Extensive pre-departure briefing & materials including health information, reading list & map

International airfare and gratuities not included. Certain brands of alcohol and beverages not included in some camps.

We plan your adventures in areas where wildlife habitats are known to exist for the season and time you're traveling. Still, animals are not in a zoo. They run freely and we cannot always anticipate their movements.



DEEPER AFRICA

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