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Uganda: The Pearl of Africa, Visits Toronto

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Uganda offers the rare opportunity to see Chimpanzees and Mountain Gorillas in their natural habitat, at a cost lower than more popular African nations.

"For magnificence, for variety of form and colour, for profusion of brilliant life – bird, insect, reptile, beast – for vast scale – Uganda is truly 'the Pearl of Africa'." wrote Sir Winston Churchill in his 1908 book, "My African Journey". And truer words were never spoken, the Uganda Tourism Board wants Canadian agents to know.

The Uganda Tourism Board wrapped up a 3-city tour of Canada in Toronto late last week, after earlier stops in Montreal and Edmonton, as well as participation at the Vancouver International Travel Expo, a consumer travel show in Vancouver.

Along with Tourism Uganda was their North American Representatives, PHG

Consulting, as well as four of the many tour operators available to create custom tours for travellers.

"First off, it has excellent weather. We are on the equator that ensures that we have sunshine and uniform temperature throughout the year."
the Hon. Daudi Migereko, Board Chairman for Tourism Uganda, told TravelPulse Canada. *"And the major attractions are in the game parks and the wildlife in the country, and our government has worked on preserving it, to make sure that human beings are not a threat to wildlife, by having special programs to protect the wildlife. And with the wildlife protected, we can have tourists come in to view the wildlife."*

"We realize that our country has not been sufficiently marketed in Canada and other Western countries and this trip has given us an opportunity to meet the travel agents in Canada, explain to them what Uganda has to offer, what attractions we have, what kind of infrastructure and facilities we have, because some people were worried about the hotels and we've been able to show that we have hotels that meet international standards." he continued. *"By talking to travel agents, they will help us to talk to their clients about what Uganda has to offer, what kind of destination Uganda is, and what are the arrangements that can be put in place in order for tourists from Canada to have a good time, have a good experience, once he or she decides to go to Uganda."*

"There is a big push right now in the travel community that we want to disperse tourism and the term overtourism has been widely used." said Sasha VanDenBosch, Account Director at PHG Consulting, Uganda Tourism Board's North American representative. *"The region around Uganda has become very very popular – Kenya, Tanzania, everyone knows those areas, everyone goes there – and unfortunately, people just aren't aware of Uganda yet, but it has everything those areas have and more, because Uganda also has the Gorillas and the Chimps."*

About Uganda:

While not exactly as top-of mind as some other African destinations, the Uganda Tourism Board is working hard to ensure agents and consumers are aware of not only the exotic and awe-inspiring wildlife, but also the blend of rich and immersive cultural experiences, and the diversity of Uganda's people.

Wildlife: In addition to more popular wildlife like Zebra, Giraffe, Hippopotamus, and the 'Big Five' (Lions, Leopards, Rhinoceros, Elephants and Cape Buffalo) Uganda is known for its primate populations, including the endangered Chimpanzees and Mountain Gorillas. Visitors to Uganda can track Chimpanzees in Kibale National Park, where 1,500 chimps can be found, and Budongo Forest Reserve in Murchison Falls National Park, while Mountain Gorillas can be tracked in Bwindi Impenetrable National Park and Mgahinga Gorilla National Park. And at \$750 US per person, the cost for tracking Mountain Gorillas is almost have that of nearby Rwanda.



Majestic and stately Giraffe may be seen throughout Uganda.

Uganda also has the highest concentration of birds in all of Africa, with some parks like Queen Elizabeth National Park boasting some 600 different species.



Birdwatchers will delight at the over 1,000 species of birds in Uganda, including the Fox's Weaver which is found only in Uganda.

The best wildlife viewing is in one of Uganda's ten national parks, located

throughout the country, including...

– Bwindi and Mgahinga: Located in the southwestern corner of the country, Bwindi Impenetrable National Park and Mgahinga Gorilla National Park are known for their Mountain Gorilla populations, with more than half of the world's Mountain Gorilla population found in Uganda.

– Kibale: Further north is Kibale National Park, which is also known for its primate population, including 1,500 chimpanzees and other species like Red Colubus Monkeys, Bushbaby and more.

– Murchison Falls: Named for the waterfalls that plunge 130 feet through a narrow gorge, Murchison Falls National Park, bisected by the Nile River, sustains large populations of Hippopotamus and Nile Crocodile and offers game drives, cruises to the foot of the falls or hikes to the top. Also located within the park is Budongo Forest Reserve, offering an opportunity to track some of the 700 Chimpanzees that reside here.



Murchison Falls, on the Nile River in Uganda, is the second highest waterfall in Africa, tumbling 43m into Lake Albert.

– Queen Elizabeth: Located between Kibale and Bwindi/Mgahinga, Queen Elizabeth National Park is a birder's paradise with over 600 species of birds, and four of the 'Big Five', including one of only two populations of unique tree-climbing lions. The park spans the equator, allowing visitors the unique experience of standing in both the northern and southern hemispheres simultaneously. It is also home to the Uganda Carnivore Program, which offers guided lion tracking and nocturnal tours

– Kidepo: Located near the northern border, Kidepo National Park offers a remote and rugged African wilderness, where vast grasslands extend in all directions toward distant mountain ranges. The numerous big game found here include Elephants, Giraffe, Lions, Cheetah, and one of Africa's largest Buffalo herds.

– Ziwa: Located almost in the centre of the country, Ziwa Rhino and Wildlife

Ranch is the only place in Uganda where visitors can view Rhinoceros. Wiped out in the country for a variety of factors, most caused by humans, this National Park and its breeding program, were put in place to reintroduce both the Black Rhinoceros and Northern White Rhinoceros to Uganda's National Parks.

Cultural Experiences: But Uganda is more than just wildlife, offering up rich and immersive cultural experiences, including the opportunity to experience the unique culture of Uganda and interact with locals, including some 50 distinct tribes, and learn about their lives, customs and livelihoods. And many of the lodges even support nearby villages by providing a portion of their nightly rates to fund community development projects, and many locals will often visit lodges to perform for visitors, including traditional dance and music.

Adventure Sports: The town of Jinja, located a two hour drive east of Kampala near the source of the Nile River, is the epicentre for adventure sports in Uganda, with activities such as Zip lining, Kayaking and white water rafting, bungee jumping, as well as fishing and horseback riding safaris on the Nile.

Accommodation: There's an accommodation type for everyone throughout Uganda, from backpacker and youth hostels, to budget and luxury lodges, tented camps, campsites and even homestays. Lodges are available in all of the country's national parks and range from basic lodges to luxury lodges with high-end restaurants and amenities.

Getting There: From most major Canadian gateways, connecting flights to Entebbe Airport, which serves Uganda's capital city of Kampala, are available via several cities in Europe, the Middle East and South Africa. Entebbe is served by many major carriers including Emirates, Turkish Airlines, KLM, Ethiopian Airlines, EgyptAir, Qatar Airlines and Brussels Airlines.

Within Uganda, Aerolink Uganda offers scheduled and charters flights into Uganda's National parks daily from Entebbe.

For more information on travel to Uganda, visit the Uganda Tourism Board website at VisitUganda.com, [PHG Consulting](http://PHGConsulting.com), or one of the following tour operators:

Adventure Vacation Safaris (AdventureVacationSafaris.com), specializing in custom safaris for Gorilla and Chimpanzee tracking, game drives, and birding and fishing safaris.

Gorilla Trek Africa (GorillaTrekAfrica.com), specialises in custom Gorilla trekking tours of varying lengths, from 3-day Gorilla tours to 15-day safari holidays.

Venture Uganda (VentureUganda.org) is a small, independent travel company offering tailor-made group tours to Uganda, focused on wildlife safaris, bird watching, adventure and outdoor activities and authentic cultural experiences.

Sites Travel (SitesTravel-UG.com) is a travel and tours management company, offering travel, car hire and holiday services, including safari packages of varying lengths.

For a full list of tour operators in Uganda, visit the AUTO (Association of Uganda Tour Operators) website at UgandaTourOperators.org/members.

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