



26 Sep- 01 Oct 2017 | Gorilla tracking in Virunga & trek up Nyiragongo volcano

Join acclaimed conservationist and extraordinary Chief Warden Emmanuel de Merode and philanthropist Jochen Zeitz, to explore Virunga National Park; the UNESCO World Heritage Site in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. Virunga – the subject of last year’s Oscar-nominated documentary - is Africa’s oldest national park and the continent’s most biologically diverse protected area. The beautiful landscape covers 7800 square kilometers (3000 square miles) of forests, savannas, lava plains, swamps, erosion valleys, active volcanoes, and the glaciated peaks of the Rwenzori mountains.

Virunga is home to about a quarter of the world’s critically endangered mountain gorillas. The park’s two other Great Ape species, eastern lowland *Grauer’s* gorillas and chimpanzees, make Virunga the only park in the world to host three taxa of Great Apes. Another prominent inhabitant of the park is the Okapi, an endangered species, along with large colonies of hippopotamus, forest and savanna elephants, lions, and numerous rare bird species.

Anthropologist and conservationist, Emmanuel de Merode works to protect endangered wildlife in Central and Eastern Africa. His main focus is supporting African wildlife rangers in remote national parks and reserves, primarily in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, where he has been able to sustain the national parks through the country’s 15-year civil war, putting his life on the line every single day to save these animals. Enjoy this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to meet this extraordinary conservationist and the endangered gorillas that he has dedicated his life to protecting.

Day 1 – Depart Kigali, Rwanda, for the DRC border (3 hours). Arrive at Grand Barrier, where you will meet your Virunga National Park guide, who will guide you through the permit process and, together with a Ranger, begin your journey to Kibumba (1 hours). En route, soak up the surrounding culture and get a taste of rural village life, before arriving at Kibumba for a relaxing first evening and on a clear night, the glows of the Nyiragongo and Nyamalagera volcanoes.

- 12:00 Arrive Goma
- 12:30 Depart La Grande Barriere (Goma) to Rumangabo
- 13:30 Arrive Kibumba
- 14:00 Lunch at Kibumba
- Afternoon of relaxation
- 19:30 Dinner at Kibumba

Day 2 – After a revitalizing morning feast, your exciting journey will begin with a detailed briefing followed by a 3-5 hour trek through beautiful forests to locate and watch the key gorilla characters and families. Visiting a mountain gorilla family at Virunga is a life-changing experience. Mountain gorillas are highly intelligent, well natured and fascinating to observe. The silverback's powerful presence is awe-inspiring, yet his calm clearly earns him the title, "gentle giant". People are equally struck by the tenderness and care that mother gorillas show their young, and then of course, there are the juveniles who spend most of every waking hour at play making visitors smile.

- 07:00 Breakfast
- 08:00 Gorilla trek briefing
- 08:30 Gorilla trek
- 13:00 Lunch at Kibumba
- 15:00 Light forest walk
- 19:30 Dinner at Kibumba

Day 3 – In order to have more time to familiarize yourself with Virunga's mountain gorillas, today you will make a second gorilla trek. After spending another incredible day with the gorillas in Virunga's forests, you will be transferred to Mikeno Lodge.

- 06:30 Breakfast
- 07:30 Gorilla trek briefing
- 08:00 Gorilla trek
- 12:30 Leave for Mikeno Lodge
- 13:30 Arrive at Mikeno Lodge
- 14:00 Lunch at Mikeno Lodge
- 15:00 Tour of the Rumangabo compound
- 19:30 Dinner at Mikeno Lodge

Day 4 – At Mikeno, you have the opportunity to visit and learn about the Senkwekwe Center, home to Virunga's gorilla orphans, or choose to see a demonstration by the Congo Hounds, Virunga's important anti-poaching unit. Other activities are serene forests walks or visits to the nearby coffee estate.

- 07:00 Breakfast at Mikeno Lodge
- 08:00 Visit Senkwekwe gorilla orphanage
- 10:00 Congo hounds demonstration
- 12:30 Lunch at Mikeno Lodge
- Afternoon of relaxation
- 19:30 Dinner at Mikeno Lodge

Day 5 – Today begins with a transfer from Mikeno to Kibati (1 hour), where you will meet a dedicated, expert porter to begin your trek up Nyiragongo volcano. After a spectacular 4-6 hour hike, you will spend probably the most unique and adventurous night of your life, sleeping out on top of the volcano.

Nyiragongo is a beautiful stratovolcano that features the world's largest lava lake. The volcano's forested lower slopes are home to a variety of animals including chimpanzees, monkeys and bushbuck.

In contrast, Nyiragongo's summit rim is largely without vegetation and sometimes even dusted with snow. From the rim, visitors can peer down into a churning lava lake, seeing and hearing hot gas exploding up through a mosaic of molten lava.

Although predictable and therefore safe for tourists, Nyiragongo is greatly feared during eruptions. Due to the low silica content of its lava, Nyiragongo's lava flows are extremely fluid and during its 2002 eruption, some of the lava reached speeds of 100 km/hr (62 mph) and travelled all the way to Lake Kivu.

07:00 Breakfast

- 08:00 Leave for Kibati
- 09:15 Nyiragongo ascent briefing
- 10:00 Start climb of Nyiragongo
- 17:00 Reach summit
- 18:00 Dinner atop the volcano
- Overnight at the summit

Day 6 – Following an early departure from the summit, today's more gentle walk down the volcano will take about 4 hours, after which you will be transported to Goma, followed by Grande Barriere, and finally returning to Kigali (3 hours) feeling inspired, rejuvenated and savoring the memories of a life-changing trip.

- 06:30 Begin descent of Nyiragongo
- 11:30 Reach Kibati
- 12:00 Transfer back to Goma
- 12:30 Reach Grande Barriere
- 13:30 Back to Kigali airport

Contact safari@AfricanAdventure.com for further details for departure dates and pricing

