

UGANDA HIGHLIGHTS GORILLAS, CHIMPANZEES & SHOEBILLS

JANUARY 13 - FEBRUARY 1, 2018

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Uganda is where the East African savannah meets the bird-rich West African jungle. Where else but in this impossibly lush country can one observe lions prowling the open plains in the morning and track chimpanzees through the rainforest undergrowth the same afternoon, then the next day navigate tropical channels teeming with hippopotamus and huge Nile Crocodiles before setting off into the misty mountains to stare deep into the eyes of a Mountain Gorilla? Certainly, Uganda is the only safari destination whose range of forest primates is as impressive as its selection of plains antelope.

This tour is designed for people who would like a comfortable highlights package to this fascinating country. We will travel in a spacious air-conditioned bus and spend two to three nights at all of our destinations. While the focus is on gorillas, Chimpanzees and the Shoebill we will witness a huge diversity of birds and mammals. We have chances to see both Leopard and Lion, herds of African Elephant, giraffe and hippopotamus, Cape Buffalo, zebra and a tremendous diversity of hoofed mammals and primates. The birding is extraordinarily diverse with hornbills, parrots, kingfishers, bee-eaters, turacos, bustards, trogons, hornbills and an array of dazzling sunbirds and weavers leading the charge. We expect to encounter more than 450 species of birds.

Uganda is safe and delightfully friendly. As a country it has undergone astonishing changes in recent decades. Infrastructure improvements to the roads, lodges and development programs for the local guides have made wildlife touring in Uganda one of the best experiences possible in the natural history world.

January 13-14, Days 1-2: Travel to Uganda; Arrival in Entebbe. Tour participants should make plans to arrive in Entebbe (airport code EBB) no later than the evening of January 14. Upon arrival and clearing immigration and customs you will be met by our professional guide service and transferred to our hotel which is located not far from the airport. The lovely hotel Boma is set in delightful gardens with lots of birds. Those wishing to arrive early will have plenty of birds to keep them occupied until the start of the tour. Upon request, the VENT office will be happy to assist with any additional lodging arrangements.

NIGHT (January 13): In transit (overnight flight)

NIGHT (January 14): The Boma Hotel, Entebbe

January 15, Day 3: Mabamba Wetlands and Entebbe Botanic Gardens. After an early breakfast we will head out to Mabamba Wetlands about 50 kilometers from Entebbe on the shores of Lake Victoria. This is one of the few remaining large swamps in the country protected by the local communities. This extensive papyrus swamp with its labyrinth of channels and lagoons, is classified as an IBA (Important Bird Area) by Birdlife International. It is home to several pairs of Shoebills – Uganda’s most famous avian resident. This charismatic species, the only representative in its family, is certainly among the most sought-after birds in Africa and we’ll make special efforts today to find it while birding through the channels by boat. There will be a good selection

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of classic East African waterbirds: Pink-backed Pelican, Long-tailed Cormorant, Goliath Heron, African Fish-Eagle, Yellow-billed Duck, African Black Crake, Grey Crowned-Crane, African Jacana and Malachite Kingfisher. There is also a host of more local species such as Long-toed Lapwing, Blue-breasted Bee-eater, Blue-headed Coucal, Papyrus Gonolek and with luck the rare Blue Swallow and nomadic Weyn's Weaver.

After some success with the Shoebill (we hope) and lunch, we will return to Entebbe for a siesta. In the afternoon we will make a visit to the excellent Entebbe Botanic Gardens. Here big trees attract large numbers of spectacular birds like the Black and White Casqued Hornbill, Great Blue Turaco, Eastern Plantain-Eater and African Grey Parrot. We have a chance for the elusive Bat Hawk, the scarce Orange Weaver and even the rarely seen White-backed Night-Heron.

NIGHT: The Boma Hotel, Entebbe

January 16, Day 4: Drive to Lake Mburo. After breakfast we will drive to a protected forest near Kampala. This is a good location for some elusive birds like the White-spotted Flufftail, African Pied Hornbill, Fire-crested Alethe and shy Green-backed Twinspot. Heading south and crossing the Equator we will make another stop at Kaku Swamp. This extensive wetland is a productive location for a variety of ducks like Hottentot and Red-billed Teal, Fulvous and White-faced Whistling-Ducks, Spur-winged Goose plus other large wetland birds like African Swamphen and Saddle-billed Stork. The beautiful Lilac-breasted Roller is often located on the powerlines here. We will arrive in the afternoon at Lake Mburo National Park enjoying a game drive as we enter the park.

NIGHT: Mantana Tented Camp, Lake Mburo National Park

January 17, Day 5: Lake Mburo National Park. Lake Mburo is a superb wetland and Acacia savanna sanctuary. Birding and mammal-watching here is a delightful experience, with superb scenery and a markedly different fauna to other reserves. This is the best place in the country to see game animals such as Eland as well as Burchell's Zebra, Topi and Impala. The lakes within the park are home to hippopotamus and Nile Crocodiles and a variety of waterbirds, while fringing swamps hide secretive papyrus specialists such as Sitatunga with a chance for Leopard, Spotted Hyena and Jackals. Birding is excellent. Among the many possible species are some real global rarities like White-backed Night-Heron, African Finfoot and the range-restricted Red-faced Barbet. Among a huge list of other bird species recorded in the park are African Marsh-Harrier, White-backed, Lappet-faced and White-headed vultures, Brown Snake-Eagle, African Hawk-Eagle, Coqui and Crested francolins, Emerald-spotted Wood-Dove, Brown Parrot, Red-chested, Jacobin, Levaillant's, Klaas's and Dideric cuckoos, Bare-faced Go-away-bird, Striped Kingfisher, Broad-billed Roller, African Gray Hornbill, Green Woodhoopoe, Common Scimitarbill, Blue-naped and Speckled mousebirds, Spot-flanked Barbet, Nubian and Bearded woodpeckers, White-browed Scrub-Robin, Singing, Long-tailed and Siffling cisticolas, Yellow-throated Longclaw, Chinspot Batis, Yellow-breasted Apalis, Red-faced Crombec, Lead-colored Flycatcher, White-winged Black Tit, African Penduline-tit, Black-headed Oriole, Tropical Boubou, White-crested Helmetshrike, Brubru, Black Cuckoo-shrike, Greater Blue-eared and Wattled starlings.

NIGHT: Mantana Tented Camp, Lake Mburo National Park

January 18, Day 6: Drive to Bwindi Impenetrable National Park. After breakfast we will enjoy another game drive as we make our way out of the park, where we will be on the lookout for any additional mammals like Defassa Waterbuck, Cape Buffalo, Bushbuck, Warthog, and Dwarf and Banded mongoose. We will then head towards Bwindi Impenetrable forest. The Park is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is home to approximately half of the world population of 600 Mountain Gorillas. This vast reserve offers some of the most productive montane forest birding in Africa and supports 23 of Uganda's 24 Albertine Rift endemic bird species. Once part of a much larger forest that included the Virunga Volcanoes in neighboring Rwanda, Bwindi Impenetrable National Park is now an ecological island within a sea of human cultivation, and therefore, of

immense conservation importance. Excellent forest birding, not least the prospect of numerous rare and localized Albertine Rift endemics, makes this a true birding Mecca.

NIGHT: Gorilla Mist Camp, Ruhija

January 19, Day 7: Gorilla Trekking in Bwindi Impenetrable forest. There can be little doubt that this may be the most anticipated day on the tour. We will set off early to the park headquarters for a briefing prior to Gorilla Trekking. We will be led by park guides through wet forests with a dense understorey of Wild Nettles and Giant Celery, often on steep terrain, to a group of Mountain Gorillas. These groups have been habituated by researchers and park staff to daily visits by wildlife enthusiasts. The park guides vocalize to the gorilla groups as we approach to make them aware of our arrival. These huge apes are amazingly placid and tolerant of our presence. It is usually possible to get to within a few meters of them as they play and feed. It is sensational to stare into the eyes of these gentle giants and watch them in awe as they go about their daily activities. Each encounter is different and has its own rewards; you are undoubtedly going to enjoy the close views of adults feeding, grooming and resting as the youngsters frolic and swing from vines in a delightfully playful display. It will be an unforgettable experience.

SPECIAL NOTES ABOUT GORILLA VIEWING: The demand for permits to view the gorillas is enormous. Permits are expensive, currently \$600 USD. It is therefore essential if you wish to accompany a gorilla trek (the only realistic way to see these magnificent animals) during your visit, that when you sign up for the tour you clearly state that you want to pay for a gorilla trek. Permits are non refundable. We anticipate that not everyone will want to accompany a gorilla trek, so we have kept this cost separate from the tour. You will need to be reasonably fit to undertake the gorilla viewing walk although the pace is kept appropriate to the participant's fitness. Normally the walk involves three to six hours but occasionally if groups are on the distant edges of their territories it may take up to ten hours. Porters are available to assist participants helping them with their packs and assisting them in the walk. Quite often the gorillas can be found within an hour with some luck. On rare occasions it is possible to miss the gorillas completely. You will have more information available on the group whereabouts during the briefing.

For those who choose to opt out of the Gorilla trek, we will organize some roadside birding in the excellent community forest with local guides. It is also possible to enjoy a village walk around the Ruhija Community and enjoy a bit of shopping and a cup of tea or coffee.

NIGHT: Gorilla Mist Camp, Ruhija

January 20-21, Days 8-9: Bwindi Impenetrable Forest. We will spend two days exploring the roads and trails in this forest, one of the most bird and mammal rich sites in East Africa. Among some of the primates possible are L'Hoest's Monkey, Black and White Colobus; Red-tailed and Blue monkeys. Some other mammals possible include both the Rwenzori and Yellow-backed duikers, plus Carruther's, Boehm's and Alexander's squirrels. Birding, while at times may be slow, will reward the patient observer with an incredible variety of species. Among the many species possible are Great Sparrowhawk, Western Bronze-naped Pigeon, Olive, Dusky and Barred Long-tailed Cuckoos, Bar-tailed Trogon, Cinnamon-chested and Black bee-eaters, Blue-throated Roller, Grey-throated Barbet, Willcock's Honeyguide, African Olive and Elliot's woodpeckers, African Broadbill, Anson's, Little, Slender-billed, Cabanis's, White-throated, Red-tailed and Kakamega Greenbul, Grey-chested Illadopsis, Red-throated Alethe, Equatorial Akalat, Blue-shouldered and White-bellied robin-chat, Black-faced Rufous Warbler, Short-tailed Warbler, Slender-billed, Waller's, Narrow-tailed and Stuhlmann's starlings. At higher altitudes, if the weather permits, we will try our luck with Handsome Francolin, Double-toothed Barbet, Doherty's Bush-Shrike, the beautiful Purple-breasted Sunbird, Dusky Twinspot and, with luck, the Kivu Ground Thrush to mention a few.

NIGHTS: Mahogany Springs, Munyanga River, Bwindi

January 22, Day 10: Bwindi to Queen Elizabeth National Park. This morning we will make our way from the Bwindi Forest to Queen Elizabeth National Park, always on the lookout for more bird sightings. Queen Elizabeth National Park protects varied habitats ranging from open savannah to rainforest, from dense papyrus swamps and crater lakes to the vastness of Lake Edward. It is little wonder that QENP boasts one of the highest biodiversity ratings of any game reserve in the world. Almost 100 mammal species and a remarkable 600 bird species make this superb safari territory, with African Elephant, a profusion of hippos, the elusive Giant Forest Hog and handsome Uganda Kob all regularly sighted. We will drive through the Ishasha section which is famed for the presence of tree climbing lions. If lucky, we may have a view of these magnificent felines as they bask in the trees. This afternoon after checking into the Mweya Safari Lodge, we may have an evening game drive in the park to try for some nocturnal birds and mammals. The lodge boasts a marvelous waterfront setting in the shadow of the Rwenzori Mountains.

NIGHT: Mweya Safari Lodge, Queen Elizabeth National Park

January 23, Day 11: Game Drive in the park and Launch Cruise on the Kazinga Channel. We start early at dawn and go for a drive to look for the big game (African Elephant, Cape buffalo, Leopard, Lion, Topi are all possible) and many excellent birds amidst great scenery. Special birds include Marabou Stork, Lesser Flamingo, Bateleur Eagle, Black-bellied Bustard, Red-necked Spurfowl, Senegal Lapwing, Collared Pratincole, Verreaux's Eagle-Owl, Red-throated Bee-eater, Gabon Nightjar, Black-headed Batis and Sulphur-breasted Bush Shrike to mention a handful. This afternoon, after our lunch at the lodge, we have a boat cruise on the spectacular Kazinga Channel that runs through the park connecting Lake George and Lake Edward. Beyond the hippos and crocodiles are more classic wetland birds including such stunners as Great White Pelican, Little Bittern, Saddle-billed Stork, Black Crane, African Jacana, Water Thick-knee, African Skimmer, African Pygmy Kingfisher and Yellow-backed Weaver.

NIGHT: Mweya Safari Lodge, Queen Elizabeth National Park

January 24, Day 12: Drive to Kibale National Park. Today we will drive to Kibale National Park. Kibale's major attraction is the opportunity to observe troops of chimpanzees. These incredible apes, more closely related to humans than to any other living creature, are tremendous fun to watch as they socialize and vocalize noisily in fruiting trees. A network of shady forest trails provides much to delight botanists and butterfly lovers, while birders are in for a treat with 335 species. The elusive forest elephant, smaller and hairier than its savannah counterpart, moves seasonally into the park, while other terrestrial mammals include buffalo, giant forest hog and a half dozen antelope species. In the afternoon it will be possible to have a nature walk at Bigodi wetland which is managed by the local community, a successful story of the benefits of ecotourism. It provides a good chance to see such beautiful birds as Yellow-billed Barbet and Red-headed Bluebill and monkeys like the Red Colobus and Gray-cheeked Mangabey.

NIGHT: Chimpanzee Guest House, Kibale National Park

January 25, Day 13: Chimp tracking at Kibale National Park. After an early breakfast we will go to the forest for birding and chimp tracking. Tracking the chimpanzee is a very interesting experience; the way they feed, climb trees, respond to humans, care for their young ones, is just phenomenal. This is a daily drama of life in a rainforest and a rare chance to look back into a window of our evolutionary history. This park is notable for its primate population, with the chimpanzees being the most famous; however, birding in Uganda is astonishingly rich and Kibale is no exception. If we are very fortunate we may be able to track down the elusive Green-breasted Pitta. We have chances of finding a variety of birds with some of the notables including African Crowned Eagle, Black-billed Turaco, Narina Trogon, Black Bee-eater, White-headed Wood-Hoopoe, African Emerald Cuckoo, Pink-footed Puffback and Petit's Cuckoo-shrike.

NIGHT: Chimpanzee Guest House, Kibale National Park

January 26, Day 14: Kibale National Park to Masindi. After some early morning birding and mammal watching we will travel north to Masindi. The roads are all currently unsealed and we will select our route depending on rain patterns in the area. There will be regular stops for birding along the way.

NIGHT: Masindi Hotel, Masindi

January 27, Day 15: Budongo Forest-The Royal Mile. The Budongo Forest is one of the most celebrated forest birding sites in all of Africa. An extension of the inaccessible forests of the Congo that just cross into Uganda it is a unique location for a selection of rare forest birds. We will make a day out of taking in the best this forest has to offer. Birds we will search for include Nahan's Francolin, Yellowbill, Cassin's Spinetail, African Dwarf Kingfisher, Chocolate-backed Kingfisher, White-thighed Hornbill, Buff-spotted and Yellow-crested woodpeckers, Chestnut and Jameson's wattle-eyes, Ituri Batis, Green Hylia, Chestnut-capped Flycatcher, Rufous-crowned Eremomela, Brown and Pale-breasted Illadopsis, Forest Robin and Red Tailed Ant-thrush. In the afternoon we will return to our comfortable hotel in Masindi.

NIGHT: Masindi Hotel, Masindi

January 28, Day 16: Drive to Murchison Falls National Park. We will drive through the Budongo Forest and enter a new faunal zone as we enter the tropical savanna woodlands of Murchison Falls National Park. We will begin by exploring the Butiaba Escarpment, an area where it is possible to find some special birds like the Black-billed Barbet, Mocking Cliff-Chat, White-rumped Seedeater and Foxy Cisticola. We will later cross the Nile River and check-in at Paraa Safari Lodge. Murchison Falls Conservation area (MFNP) includes both Bugungu and Karuma Wildlife Reserves. It derives its name from the Murchison Falls where the mighty Nile River explodes through a narrow gorge and flows down to become a placid river whose banks are thronged with hippos, crocodiles, waterbucks and buffalo. The vegetation is characterized by savannah, riparian forest and woodland. Wildlife includes lions, leopards, elephants, giraffes, buffalo, hartebeest, oribis, Uganda kobs and Patas Monkey (although tall grass may make mammal watching challenging here).

NIGHT: Paraa Safari Lodge, Murchison Falls National Park

January 29, Day 17: Game Drive in Murchison Falls National Park. After an early breakfast we will go for a full morning game drive in the delta area, followed by lunch and a siesta. Birds to be on the lookout for include Beaudoin's Snake-Eagle, Dark Chanting Goshawk, Senegal Thick-knee, White-crested Turaco, Northern Carmine Bee-eater, Swallow-tailed Bee-eater, Abyssinian Ground Hornbill, Pennant-winged Nightjar, Yellow-billed Oxpecker and Silverbird. After our rest we will take the afternoon launch cruise to the bottom of the falls, bringing us up close to these magnificent falls. The bizarre Palm-nut Vulture, African Fish-Eagle, Rock Pratincole, spectacular Black-winged and Northern Red Bishop plus the peculiar Piapiac are on the radar of possibilities this afternoon.

NIGHT: Paraa Safari Lodge, Murchison Falls National Park

January 30, Day 18: Murchison Falls National Park. After breakfast, we will have another boat trip, this time down the Nile River to its delta at Lake Albert. This will provide another chance to enjoy viewing the big game in the largest conservation area in Uganda. It is also excellent as a backup chance to see the Shoebill in case we missed it earlier. In between mammal sightings there are still a huge variety of birds to keep searching for including at least four species of sunbird, eight species of cisticola and a confusing array of starlings, weavers, seedeaters, and Giant Kingfisher. After a relaxed lunch at the Lodge followed by a break, we will enjoy a drive to the top of the Murchison Falls to see the power of one of the world's most turbulent stretches of water.

NIGHT: Paraa Safari Lodge, Murchison Falls National Park

January 31 - February 1, Days 19-20: Drive to Entebbe and Departure for Home. Today we will make the return drive to Entebbe to freshen up before boarding our flights home. Evening departures (after 8 pm on January 31) will make connections with flights to the USA, which will arrive home on February 1.

DAYROOM (January 31): The Boma Hotel, Entebbe

TOUR SIZE: This tour will be limited to 8 participants.

TOUR LEADER: Kevin Zimmer (assisted by a local leader)

Kevin Zimmer has authored three books and numerous papers dealing with field identification and bird-finding in North America. His book, *Birding in the American West: A Handbook*, deals with finding and identifying birds in the western United States. Living in Alaska contributed to his affection for the Far North, where he has anchored VENT's tour program since 1986. For the past 20+ years he has concentrated his attention on the Neotropics, particularly on Brazil, Costa Rica, Panama, Peru, and Venezuela. He has directed VENT's Brazil program since 1991. Kevin has a PhD in biology (research emphasis in Avian Evolutionary Ecology) from New Mexico State University, and is a Research Associate of the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History, an elective member of the American Ornithologists' Union, and a member of the A.O.U. South American Classification Committee (SACC). He formerly served on the American Birding Association (ABA) Check-list Committee, and is a regular contributor to Cornell's Macaulay Library of Natural Sounds. He has authored numerous technical papers on the taxonomy, distribution, and behavior of Neotropical birds, particularly those of the Amazon Basin. In 2003 he completed (with co-author Mort Isler) the major chapter on the *Thamnophilidae* (antbirds) for the prestigious *Handbook of Birds of the World* series. In 2006, he and Curtis Marantz coauthored a six-CD compilation of *Bird Voices of Alta Floresta and Southeastern Amazonian Brazil* (produced by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology's Macaulay Library of Natural Sounds) that represents the most comprehensive set of commercially available bird recordings for any part of the Amazon Basin. He and Andrew Whittaker are currently at work on a comprehensive field guide to the birds of Brazil, to be published by Princeton University Press. Kevin lives in Atascadero, California with his wife, Susan. Their daughter, Marina, is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (MFT). She and her husband, Ryan, and their daughter, Brinn, are now living in Napa, California.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for this tour is **\$10,795** per person based on double occupancy from Entebbe, Uganda. This fee includes all meals beginning with dinner on Day 2 ending with dinner on Day 19, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation, park entrance fees, boat launch, gratuities, and guide services provided by the tour leader and local guides. Tour fees do not include airfare from your home to Entebbe and return, optional gorilla trekking permit, visa fees, alcoholic beverages, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration a small party supplement may be charged.

The single supplement for this tour is **\$1,185**. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodations or if you prefer to share but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you.

NOTE: The cost of the optional gorilla trekking permit is **\$600** (subject to change and non-refundable once purchased) and **MUST** be purchased on your behalf by VENT at the time of booking. It is important to note that the gorilla permits are subject to availability and therefore it is imperative that you book early and inform the VENT office that you require a permit.

REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT: To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The initial deposit for this tour is **\$500** per person. If you would like to pay your initial deposit by check, money order, or bank transfer, your tour space will be held for 10 days to allow time for the VENT office to receive your deposit and completed registration form. If you prefer to pay the initial deposit using a credit card, your deposit must be made with MasterCard, Visa or American Express at the time of registration. The VENT registration form

(available from the VENT office or by download at www.ventbird.com) should then be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office.

PAYMENTS: Initial tour deposits may be made by MasterCard, Visa, American Express check, money order, or bank transfer. All other tour payments, including second deposits, interim payments, final balances, special arrangements, etc., must be made by check, money order, or bank transfer (contact the VENT office for bank transfer information). A second deposit of **\$2,000** per person will be due 180 days prior to departure (July 17, 2017). Full payment of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to the tour departure date.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Refunds are made according to the following schedule: If cancellation is made 180 days or more before the departure date, any monies paid less **\$500** is refundable. If cancellation is made between 180 and 120 days before the departure date, the total deposit to date less **\$1,000** is refundable. If cancellation is made fewer than 120 days before the departure date, no refund is available. ***We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance to protect for your protection.***

If you cancel:

180 days or more before departure
Between 180 and 120 days before departure
Fewer than 120 days before departure date

Your refund will be:

Any monies paid less the \$500 deposit
Total deposit to date less \$1,000
No refund available.

Upon cancellation of the transportation or travel services, where you, the customer, are not at fault and have not cancelled in violation of the terms and conditions of any of the contract for transportation or travel services, all sums paid to VENT for services not received by you will be promptly refunded by VENT to you unless you otherwise advise VENT in writing.

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is not a participant in the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a bond issued by Travelers in the amount of \$50,000. CST #2014998-50.

FUEL & FUEL SURCHARGES: In the uncertain, often volatile oil market of late, it is difficult – if not impossible – to predict fuel costs over the long term, and more specifically, at the time of operation of this departure. Our prices are based upon the prevailing fuel rates at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, if the fuel rates increase significantly, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

EXCHANGE RATE SURCHARGES: In the erratic global financial markets of today, it is difficult to predict foreign currency exchange rates over the long term or at the time of operation of a tour or cruise departure. Tour prices are based upon the rate of exchange at the time of itinerary publication. If exchange rates change drastically, it may be necessary to implement a surcharge. If a surcharge is necessary, every effort will be made to minimize the amount. In many cases, these additional foreign exchange rate surcharges are passed to VENT by its vendors and suppliers.

TRIP INSURANCE: **We strongly recommend that you purchase trip cancellation insurance as soon as possible to protect yourself against losses due to accidents or illness.** VENT recommends *Travel Insured International* as our preferred insurance provider. Check with your insurance agent regarding coverage you may presently have via other insurance policies that may cover illness during your trip. **Waiver for pre-existing conditions is available; however, stipulations apply usually requiring the purchase of the insurance soon after registering.** Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as work-related cancellation, medical upgrade, and a “Cancel for Any Reason” clause among others. Contact *Travel Insured International* (800-243-3174 or www.travelinsured.com) prior to registration for details. Not all insurance providers provide the same levels of coverage. If you purchase insurance through a company other than *Travel Insured International*, please be advised that rules and stipulations may be different.

Medical Insurance which covers you for emergency evacuation/repatriation during the trip is required for this tour. This coverage is included in the Worldwide Trip Protector plan offered by *Travel Insured International*. If you do not choose to purchase the insurance through Travel Insured International, you will need to do so through another insurance provider. A good website for information and acquisition of emergency evacuation/repatriation insurance is: www.insuremytrip.com.

AIR INFORMATION: Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements from your home and return. ***Please be sure to check with the VENT office prior to purchasing your air ticket to confirm that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. VENT cannot be responsible for any air ticket penalties.***

BAGGAGE: While on this tour you will be travelling in a high clearance, air-conditioned coaster bus (25 seats) with large windows that can be opened. Space in the bus is quite roomy but on travel days the luggage will take up much of the back seat area. We try to ensure everyone has a seat with a window to make the most of all the wildlife viewing. To ensure your comfort and that of your companions, **please limit yourself to one medium-sized soft-sided wheeled suitcase or duffel bag and one carry-on bag.** Laundry services are available everywhere that we spend more than one night, so you need only a few changes of clothing. Please use the VENT luggage tag that will be sent to you, as it helps immensely in identifying our group's baggage.

CONDITIONS: This tour does not require a high level of fitness but participants should be in good general health as much of the forest birding will be done on foot and may require walking for several hours at a time. On just a few occasions, we may be walking on narrow and/or steep forest trails (entirely optional) to find a few special birds. Our pace will, however, be slow as we bird in the forests. There will be a few lengthy drives and many of the days will be long with early starts; however, we retire for a siesta during the heat of the day when possible.

Should you have any physical limitations, please notify us in advance of departure.

The **optional** gorilla trek at Bwindi Impenetrable Forest (see Day 7) generally involves several hours of strenuous walking on steep slopes, often off-trail. The chance of finding the gorillas is very high, but on some occasions in the past the trackers have not been able to locate the mobile family groups.

While some roads in Uganda are remarkably good, many areas still require work (such as various sections of road between Masindi to Kibale). We will also be driving on dirt tracks such as in Queen Elizabeth National Park and Lake Mburo National Park, and at times some of those roads can be bumpy.

CLIMATE: The temperatures will be warm to hot (80's) during the day and pleasantly warm to cool (60's) at night. Night temperatures are cooler at a few places, reaching the low 50's, while midday temperatures may locally reach into the 90's. We can expect some showers and misty-foggy weather especially in the mountains.

CLOTHING: Long-sleeved and light-weight shirts and pants are appropriate, with a sweater or light jacket for the evening, and a thermal top for "layering." Neutral colors such as gray, khaki, and tan are best for field wear (bright colors and patterns, including white, can spook the birds and animals). Clothing that can be easily rinsed out and dried quickly is helpful. Dress will be casual throughout the tour. There is no need to bring formal dinner attire. The hotels are not heated, so bring something warm to sleep in. You will need good, solid but comfortable walking boots as we will be walking quite a bit in forest areas, albeit mostly along level or slightly rising and falling terrain. On some days, shorts will be appropriate, and a few of the hotels have swimming pools. Please remember that luggage space in the bus is limited, and laundry can be done at every lodge where we spend more than one night.

CURRENCY: Uganda Shilling (USh); currency can be exchanged at the airport banks and major hotels upon arrival. MasterCard and Visa are widely accepted, while American Express has limited acceptance. ATMs may

be available at a few select stops if you need additional cash. U.S. currency notes need to be in mint condition and printed after 2006, otherwise they are difficult to exchange.

DOCUMENTS: A passport valid for at least six months after your departure with one blank page for entry stamp, and a visa, are required for United States citizens to enter Uganda. Non U.S. citizens should check with their consulate/embassy for instructions. **All visa (E-Visa) applications must be completed via the Government of Uganda's website: visas.immigration.go.ug. Under the new application process, you must apply online for your visa at least two weeks prior to travel.** The cost at the time of publication is \$50 USD. A current certificate for Yellow Fever Vaccination is required in order to obtain your visa for entry into Uganda, and you may be asked to show your YFV certificate upon arrival at the airport.

It is very important to have your passport and money with you at all times. Suggestions for doing so are a money belt or a pouch with a shoulder strap to be worn on your side or around your neck. It is also wise to carry a copy of your passport information pages in a separate piece of luggage or photographed on your mobile phone.

EQUIPMENT: You should have a pair of binoculars that are in good condition, along with a day-pack for carrying books, sunscreen, etc. Your tour leader will have a spotting scope; however, you are welcome to bring your own if you so desire. You should bring all the camera equipment and spare batteries that you will need as they will be difficult to obtain once we leave Entebbe. And yes, do bring a folding umbrella and/or rain jacket, as we may well encounter mist or rain on a few occasions.

Other items that will be useful are a hat and sunscreen for sun protection, small flashlight or headlamp, alarm clock, and a small amount of non-aerosol insect repellent (insects are remarkably few, but the best way to avoid any chance of disease is not to get bitten). You may also want to have a small supply of snacks. Moist towelettes are also refreshing to have. Pepto-Bismol is recommended in case of mild stomach upset. Bottled water is available throughout Uganda, so a water bottle is not necessary. All participants should bring a good supply of all of their medical/pharmaceutical supplies, as they will be very difficult to obtain anywhere on the tour.

HEALTH: If you are taking prescription medication or over-the-counter medicine, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the tour safely. Please consult your physician as necessary. Remember to pack all medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication (especially liquids).

A current certificate for Yellow Fever Vaccination is required for entry into Uganda. As standard travel precautions you should be up to date with tetanus shots and strongly consider inoculations against hepatitis types A and B. It is strongly recommended that you follow a program for malaria prophylaxis. There have been some recent changes in recommendations for malaria prophylaxis. Mefloquine (Lariam) is recommended for chloroquine-resistant malaria as well as the newer Malarone which has fewer side effects. Both are available by prescription only and may not be suitable for those using cardio-vascular medication; consult your physician.

In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta Georgia. The CDC operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line at 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636), or you can check their website at www.cdc.gov/travel. Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/new_e.html (click on travel health).

Food standards are high in Uganda and few people experience any problems. We recommend drinking only bottled water (available everywhere) or filtered water provided by the lodges.

MISCELLANEOUS:

Electricity – 240 volts, 50 cycles. British standard square three-pin plug.

Language – English and Swahili are the “official” first and second national languages.

Time – 8 hours ahead of EST

INTERNET: Available at The Boma Hotel in Entebbe and most of the hotels we stay in, generally in the lobby only. The WiFi is often fairly slow. Mobile phone coverage is very good and you can text from most locations.

SUGGESTED READING: A number of traditional booksellers and online stores list excellent inventories of field guides and other natural history resources that will help prepare you for this tour. We recommend www.amazon.com which has a wide selection; www.buteobooks.com and www.nhbs.com which specialize in ornithology and natural history books; and www.abebooks.com for out-of-print and hard-to-find titles.

Birds (Field Guides):

Stephenson, Terry, and John Fanshawe; Illustrated by Brian Small, Norman Arlott, and John Gale. *Field Guide to the Birds of East Africa*. T & A D Poyser Ltd. London. 2002. A comprehensive field guide to all the birds of Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and Rwanda. It includes concise text on identification and illustrations from three of the best bird illustrators working today.

Field Guides (other topics):

Blundell, Michael. *Wild Flowers of East Africa*. HarperCollins, 1994. Good field guide with high-quality photos.

Dorst, Jean and Pierre Dandelot. *Collins Field Guide to Larger Mammals of Africa*. HarperCollins, London, 1998. Adequate alternative to Jonathan Kingdon's guide.

Kingdon, Jonathan. *The Kingdon Field Guide to African Mammals*. Academic Press Inc., 1998. A complete and informative guide to all of the mammals. All the known species of African land mammal are covered in a concise text providing full information on identification, distribution, ecology, evolutionary relationships, and conservation status.

Williams, John George and R. Fennessy. *Collins Field Guide to the National Parks of East Africa*. HarperCollins Inc., 1998. Very useful guide with background information and simple maps for each park and reserve, plus a section on mammal identification and the more conspicuous birds.

There is a wealth of reading material available for this region, and the following are just a few selections from various topics. A personal favorite is *The Tree Where Man Was Born/The African Experience* by Peter Matthiessen and Eliot Porter. The results of several long-term studies of the mammals have been published as popular books. The best include *Among the Elephants* by Iain Douglas-Hamilton, *The Serengeti Lion* by George Schaller, and *Portraits in the Wild* by Cynthia Moss. Especially if you have never been to East Africa, you may enjoy some of these "light" books about the region, history and wildlife: *Out of Africa* by Isak Dinesen, *Flame Trees of Thika* by Elspeth Huxley, *I Dreamed of Africa* by Kuki Gulman, and *A Bird Watcher in Kenya* by C. van Someren. *Nine Faces of Kenya*, compiled by Elspeth Huxley, is a good introductory primer to East African history and settlement.

TIPPING: Tipping (restaurant staff, porters, drivers, local guides) is included on VENT tours. However, if you feel one or both of your VENT leaders or any local guides have given you exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that tips are not expected and are entirely optional. Tips should be given directly to your tour leader; they should not be sent to the VENT office.

RESPONSIBILITY: Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc. (VENT) and/or its Agents act only as agents for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT and its agents can accept no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger, as tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. The right is reserved to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute leaders on any tour. Where this is necessary, notification will be given to tour members. No refund will be made for any unused portion of the tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. The prices of the tours are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on March 17, 2017, and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change therein. The right is reserved to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely. The airlines concerned and their agents and affiliates are not to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time passengers are not on board their aircraft. The passenger ticket in use by said airlines, when issued, shall constitute the sole contract between the airlines and the purchaser of these tickets and/or passenger. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for these tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airline Reporting Corporation.

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