



odzala discovery camps activities



ODZALA DISCOVERY CAMPS

Daily excursions from our camps are designed to offer our guests to experience the widest possible range of habitats, species and activities during stay. While the main focus at Ngaga Camp is the tracking of gorillas and forest walks, Lango and Mboko Camps offer a completely different range of experiences.

NGAGA CAMP GORILLA TRACKING

As a result of the work done by gorilla researchers Dr. Magda Bermejo and German Illera, habituated gorilla groups can be tracked and observed in the area around Ngaga Camp. In the extended area there are at least seven groups perhaps 105 individual gorillas.

Two of these groups have been habituated and are able to be viewed by our guests. Tracking takes place on foot with one of our guides and a skilled local tracker, with tracking excursions departing from camp and following the tracks and sign of the animals until they are located. Please note that although every effort is made, gorilla viewing is not guaranteed.

Given that Ngaga Camp is situated at the overlap between the home ranges of several groups (habituated and unhabituated), tracking expeditions do not cover enormous distances and can range in length from 1 to 8 kilometres (0.5 to 5 miles) over rolling terrain and often amidst thick undergrowth.

Including the time spent with a gorilla group, excursions can last between 2 and 8 hours.

The gorilla viewing protocol is based on the guidelines issued by the IUCN for great ape viewing and is very similar to that of Rwanda/Uganda. Protocols are designed specifically to limit stress, behavioural impact and potential disease transmission from humans to gorillas. These protocols play a critical role in gorilla conservation.

- Minimum age for gorilla viewing is 15 years – this is for reasons of safety, but also for possible disease transmission, with children under this age more prone to infection.
- Maximum proximity to gorillas is 7 metres (22 feet). It is not permitted to approach more closely and we typically view the animals at 10-15 metres (32-50 feet).
- Maximum viewing duration of any group is one hour per day. Each group of guests has two opportunities to track gorillas.
- Maximum number of guests per gorilla tracking excursion is 4, plus a guide and local tracker to make a maximum group size of 6.
- Guests that display cold, flu or other respiratory tract symptoms (coughing, runny nose, excessive sneezing etc.) will not be allowed to track gorillas.



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- No food or drinks may be consumed when near the gorillas, but guides will carry water and snacks for rest stops.
- Smoking is not allowed. Hand washing facilities are provided at Ngaga Camp prior to gorilla tracking.
- Although gorilla sightings and encounters are very reliable, viewing is dependent on variables such as weather and tracking conditions.

WALKING – NDZEHI FOREST TRAILS

The primary rainforests of the Ngaga area offer a completely different walking experience to the swampy forest area at Lango and the Savannah at Mboko. Relaxed walks along the well-maintained trail system are great for birding and finding some of the spectacular forest species. Guereza Colobus and Putty Nosed Moneys are regularly seen while other species also occur. The density of Chimpanzee in the area is very high with nest sites being regularly seen while tracking gorillas. The noisy screams and hoots of this species are often heard while in the forest, or even from Ngaga Camp itself, but it requires some good fortune to glimpse our closest relatives in the thick forest. Forest Squirrels, elaborately-built termite castles, spectacular butterflies and cool forest streams all make walking here an incredible nature experience.

WALKING – NIGHT WALKS

The Ngaga area has a much lower density of Forest Elephant and Buffalo than Lango or Mboko and it is therefore safe to venture out at night on foot in search of the forest's most secretive inhabitants. Nocturnal primates are well represented. Along with the more familiar Galagos, two really bizarre and unique creatures can possibly be spotted: the Potto and the Angwantibo. These slow-moving prosimians are tricky to find, but once located often offer really good viewing as they cling motionlessly to a branch. Shy Forest Duikers, Palm Civets and Tree Pangolins are also occasionally encountered.

Africa's largest bat, the Hammer Head Bat, whose resounding calls are unmistakable, can normally be found by scanning the canopy within the calling area. A number of owls occur in this part of the forest, the Red Chested Owlet being the most commonly seen.

PRESENTATIONS

Our resident guides and research team offer regular, informal discussions on the Gorilla Research Project, the area's wildlife and unique creatures, our conservation efforts in the region and the challenges faced in conserving viable forest ecosystems in Africa.



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COOLING OFF – NGAGA STREAM

After a hot day's gorilla tracking, the clear, cool and fresh waters of the Ngaga Stream below camp offer a blissful experience. A short, shaded stroll from the Camp brings one to an idyllic stream where lying in the shallow natural pools washes away the rigours of a day in the jungle. We have built a comfortable wooden deck on the edge of the stream to provide an alternate place to spend the middle of the day, either cooling off or enjoying watching the forest birdlife.

LANGO AND MBOKO CAMP

BOATING – LEKOLI RIVER

The Lekoli River in the Lango region offers one of the best chances to observe the wildlife of the forest since visibility here is greater than within the canopy. We make use of motorised aluminium boats and traditional pirogues to travel against the river currents whilst the most rewarding time is spent drifting silently downstream searching the beautiful forested banks for Forest Elephant, Forest Buffalo, primate species like Putty-nosed Monkey and de Brazza's Monkey and birds. Although Hippo do occur, their numbers are low and they are seldom seen. Bongo antelope are an exciting possible sighting. Crocodiles are represented by two harmless species, the Slender-snouted Crocodile and the African Dwarf Crocodile. Chimpanzees are regular in this area although more often heard than seen.

WALKING – LANGO BAI, GALLERY FOREST, SAVANNAH FRINGE

Exploring the Lango and Mboko areas on foot offer many great wildlife viewing opportunities. The area's savannah, marsh, swamp forest and riverine forest are home to Forest Elephant and Forest Buffalo, both of which are regularly encountered. Stalking quietly along forest trails can produce sightings of Red River Hog and shy forest birds. Monkeys are also often encountered and interestingly, the riverine and swamp forest is home to no less than eight monkey species. Guereza Colobus, Grey-cheeked Mangabey and Putty-nosed Monkey are regularly seen. With a bit of luck one may encounter Crowned and Moustached Monkeys, De Brazza's Monkey and Northern Talapoin.

Walking is also the best way to study the fine detail of the forest – insects, fungi, orchids, animal tracks and birds are all part of the show. The soundtrack is provided by a chorus of frogs, birds and insects whilst monkeys and other creatures hoot, scream and grunt in the background. Walking in the Lango area is adventurous as the area is very wet. Trails have been opened to allow access to the main areas, but one often returns to camp with wet and muddy shoes and even other parts of your clothing as proof of the adventure!



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DRIVING – MBOKO AND LANGO SAVANNAH

Game viewing vehicles are used in the Lango and Mboko areas primarily to access the region's diverse attractions rather than for game viewing. We use the vehicles to get to and from walking and boating activities. In the early mornings and late evenings a drive along the forest edge offers a different perspective of the landscape. Wildlife that is often seen along the forest edge includes Forest Elephant, Forest Buffalo and Western Sitatunga. After a sundowner stop, we continue to explore the savannah and forest edge, spotlighting in search of rarely seen and shy nocturnal creatures. Some of the elusive species that can be encountered with a bit of luck include Spotted Hyaena, Aardvark, Leopard, Golden Cat, Emin's Pouched Rat, Palm Civet and two species of Pangolin. This is also a good time to search for some of the many owls that occur here, whilst both Long-tailed and Swamp Nightjars are common all year round.

COOLING OFF – LEKOLI RIVER

The perfect place to end a forest or adventure walk is our river deck at Mboko Camp. Replete with comfortable chairs and a view of the surrounding wildlife, guests can swim, relax or enjoy a cold beverage here.