



Singita | Volcanoes National Park



Gorilla-, golden monkey-
& chimpanzee-trekking

ALL-IN-ONE GUIDE

LAST UPDATED 10/23

Gorilla trekking



Venturing into Rwanda's misty mountains to meet East Africa's mountain gorillas up close is one of the most cherished adventures for travellers who are drawn to the continent's raw natural beauty. Amplifying the experience - and set right on the edge of Volcanoes National Park - [Singita Kwitonda Lodge](#) and [Kataza House](#) share a 1.2km border with the Park.

The entire trekking experience is tailored to make the most of every moment - from the pre-trek briefing sessions in the lodge's Conservation Room the night before to being kitted out in the on-site Gear Room. Guests also receive made-to-order snacks for their backpacks with a variety of nutritious options.

Permits

- > Gorilla-trekking permits in Rwanda cost **USD 1,500 per person** per day (Non-refundable).
- > Only 96 permits are issued each day, so it's recommended to book in advance.
- > The cost of permits goes towards sustainable conservation initiatives – in particular to preserve and protect mountain gorillas, precious natural landscapes, as well as the development of communities living around Volcanoes National Park.

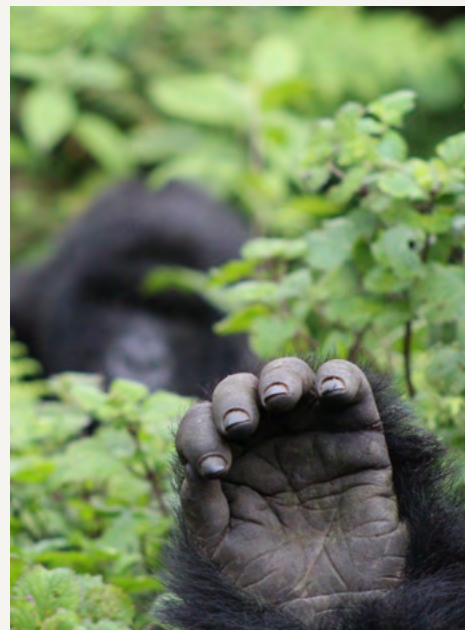


Preparation

On the day before their trek...

Singita's Conservationist at Singita Volcanoes Park will give guests a comprehensive pre-trek briefing in our dedicated Conservation Room at Singita Kwitonda Lodge. During this informal informative talk, they will:

- learn what their day will entail from a practical perspective
- find out more about the various gorilla families
- receive an important safety briefing
- after their briefing, guests will be fitted with gear that includes everything from hiking boots to water-resistant pants and jackets, gloves & a backpack (which can be borrowed and are conveniently on hand in Singita's onsite gear room)
- while guests are having dinner, the items will be delivered to their suites



Meet Charles Nsabimana
– one of Singita’s inspiring
Conservationists



Gearing up

On the day of their trek... guests will be fitted with gators and provided with walking sticks. Other items that are provided include snacks, a packed lunch, a water bottle, and a comfort kit (containing a buff, hand sanitiser, sun cream and a sweat towel).



Please note:

While we do have boots available, sizes are limited, so we recommend that guests bring their own. Be sure to pack shoes with a good grip – you’ll need ones that can withstand the terrain, which is often quite slippery and muddy.

All set

On the morning of their trek... guests are awoken around 5:30am before meeting at the main lodge at 6am for a light continental breakfast and a cup of freshly brewed Rwandan coffee. The lodge team will be on standby for any assistance needed with gear.

- 6:45am depart for the Trekking Headquarters at Volcanoes National Park (10-minute drive)
- On arrival:
 - > Coffee will be served
 - > The guests' Driver Guide will secure their spots with specific gorilla families (selecting the most suitable family depending on the group's requirements – there are however no guarantees).
- Guests will then join their group and Volcanoes National Park Guide for a detailed briefing. At 8am, vehicles will depart to the various trailheads for a 15-minute to one-hour drive – depending on the gorilla family each group has been allocated.
- At the start of the trailhead, guests will be allocated a porter to assist with carrying bags and navigating challenging terrain (this is recommended). Cash is required to pay the porters (the minimum amount is USD 10).
- The time that it takes to reach the gorilla family varies and can be anything from 30 minutes to 3-4 hours, and treks reach an altitude from 2,500-4,000m.



Please note:

Should a guest prefer a shorter trek, the Driver Guide will request this. It can however not be pre-requested or planned.



The gorilla-trekking terrain varies from farmlands to thick bushes closer to the Park boundary, and visitors may be allocated to a gorilla family who is on the move – which could make their trek longer. This may at times require navigating a path through dense vegetation, which can be slippery. There are also stinging nettles, which is why we recommend gloves and gators.

- > VNP Trackers (who hike up the mountain early in the morning to locate the gorilla families ahead of visitors' departure) will be on hand to assist guests with their interactions with the gorillas.
- > Once visitors reach their allocated gorilla family, they are allowed to spend one

hour watching them. After that, they'll meet their porters, have lunch, and take a moment to reflect, before making their way down the mountain to the trailhead, and departing for the lodge.

- > The expected arrival time back at the lodge could be as early as 12pm, or as late as 5pm – it all depends on the duration of the trek. Upon arrival, guests will be welcomed back with refreshments.
- > The rest of the day can be spent at leisure – relaxing in their private heated pool and gazing out towards Mount Sabyinyo, ensconced by their private fireplaces, enjoying in-room massage treatments, having a quiet private dinner in their suite, and/or reflecting on this once-in-a-lifetime experience in the lodge's Conservation Lounge.

Trekking rules & notes

- > There are 14 fully habituated gorilla families living in Volcanoes National Park. To limit the amount of contact the gorillas have with humans, the maximum number of visitors per trekking group is eight.
- > The maximum duration of a viewing per group is 1 hour per day.
- > Due to safety reasons and to limit possible disease transmissions, the minimum age to view gorillas is 15 years. (Children under 15 are more prone to infection.)
- > To safeguard the gorillas, visitors who display cold, flu or other respiratory tract symptoms won't be allowed to participate in treks. The park office has the authority to deny any such visitor/s access and in instances like these, the cost of the visitor's gorilla-tracking permit will be refunded.
- > Gorilla trekking is strenuous. Therefore, visitors with conditions that could be triggered by high altitudes or vigorous exercise are advised to consult with their general practitioner and have a certificate of health issued.
- > Stretchers are available for visitors with limited mobility at a rate of USD 200.
- > Smoking and spitting in the park are strictly prohibited.



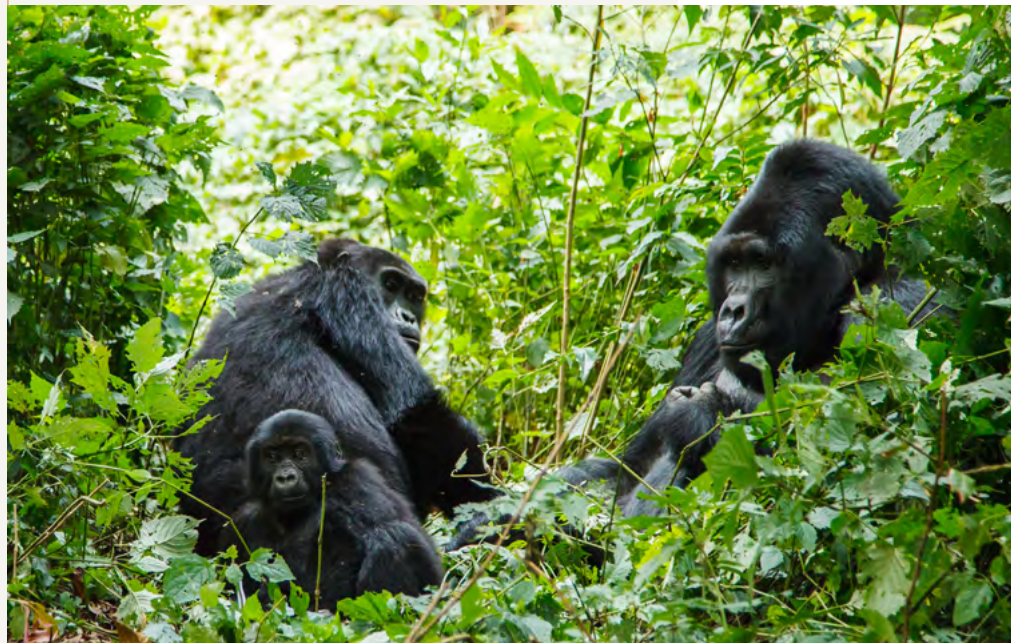
- > While gorilla sightings and encounters are very reliable, viewing is dependent on variables such as weather and trekking conditions. Gorilla trekking will take place regardless of prevailing weather conditions.

Gorilla etiquette

- Please do not consume any food or drink while in the presence of gorillas.
- Only cameras are allowed while viewing gorillas. VNP'S Trackers will keep the rest of visitors' belongings away from the gorilla family during viewings.
- Visitors should keep their voices low and refrain from making any rapid movements when they're close to the gorillas.
- Masks are compulsory to protect the gorillas from infection. If you need to cough or sneeze, you should cover your mouth and nose and turn away from the gorillas. To minimise the possible transmission of human diseases, visitors are requested to maintain a distance of 7 metres (23 feet) from the gorillas.
- If a gorilla should charge or vocalise, do not panic. Stand still, look away from the gorilla, and follow the guide's instructions.
- No flashes are permitted when taking photographs of the gorillas.

Gorilla-trekking experiences

Private	Shared
<ul style="list-style-type: none">> For a guaranteed exclusive trek, there is a premium rate of USD 15,000.> On an exclusive trek, the group can select the gorilla family they wish to trek to.> The group can select the Volcanoes National Park Guide they would like to lead them.> The group is guaranteed to be together.> The group can choose a departure time between 8am and 10am.> The group is not required to meet at the Volcanoes National Park Head Quarters and can depart directly from the lodge (walk or drive, depending on the gorilla family selected).> Their Volcanoes National Park Guide will come to the lodge for the briefing.> Full payment is required to secure the trek and once the trek is confirmed, it is non-refundable.> Names and passport details can be confirmed 60 days before a trek.> The RDB requires names and passport details as soon as possible and they are quite persistent on this.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> The group must report to headquarters at 7am for the pre-trek briefing and to start their trek.> Volcanoes National Park allocates trekkers according to operations on the day and/or fitness levels.> As a result, the group might not remain together.> The group will be allocated to a gorilla family by the National Park team.



Packing for the perfect trip



The state-of-the-art Gear Room at the main lodge offers high-quality equipment for outdoor hiking & wet weather, for guests to borrow during their stay:

- > hiking chaps/gators
- > water-resistant hiking trousers
- > hiking shoes/boots (limited sizing available)
- > a backpack
- > rain cover
- > trekking poles*

**Locally made and carved poles can also be borrowed or purchased from porters in Volcanoes National Park*



Provided by Singita:

- > Comfort kits including sunscreen, a sweat towel, a buff & sanitary/toilet eco-bags
- > A lunchbox, water bottle & made-to-order snacks



Please note:

While we do have boots available, sizes are limited, so we recommend that guests bring their own. Be sure to pack shoes with a good grip - you'll need ones that can withstand the terrain, which is often slippery and muddy.



Conditions vary, so it's best to be prepared for rain & muddy terrain and pack:

- > waterproof hiking boots with a good grip & ankle support
- > gloves
- > a waterproof jacket/raincoat
- > hiking trousers
- > thick socks
- > a long-sleeved top

**While some of these items are available to borrow at the lodge, we cannot guarantee availability and recommend that guests bring their own.*



Golden-monkey trekking

- Exclusive golden monkey treks are **USD 1,600 per group**; and individual permits are **USD 100 per person**.
- Only 32 permits are issued per day.
- The maximum number of guests per excursion is 16.
- There are no other special value-adds for exclusive treks, apart from trekking privately. Guests will still need to drive to the Park office and follow normal trekking procedures.



Trekking guidelines

Golden monkeys are endemic to the Albertine Rift found on the lower slopes of Mount Sabyinyo and Mount Karisimbi within Volcanoes National Park, and are among the most endangered primates in Africa.

- > Two groups of golden monkeys, each with more than 100 individuals, can be viewed by guests at an altitude of about 2,800 to 3,000 metres.
- > 6am: guests start their day with breakfast at the lodge, before being transferred to Volcanoes National Park Headquarters at 6:45am for registration at 7am.
- > They're then transferred to the trailhead, a 15- to 20-minute drive away, from where they'll start their trek.
- > The walk typically takes around 30 minutes before the monkeys are located, but it can be shorter or longer, depending on whether the monkeys are mobile.
- > Visitors may spend one hour observing the monkeys before heading back to the vehicle.
- > They'll typically arrive back at the lodge around 11am, but this may vary.



Chimpanzee trekking

- Individual permits: **USD 150 per person**; (plus **USD 100 per person** for park entry fees).
- Exclusive chimpanzee trek: **USD 2,000 per group** (includes park entry fee).
- The maximum number of guests per chimpanzee-trekking excursion is 8.
- Chimpanzee trekking in Nyungwe Forest starts from three reception centres – namely Uwinka, Kitabi and Gisakura – and guests meet up at each location with Park rangers.
- Guests are expected to meet at the reception as early as 4:30am. They'll depart at 5am to the trek's starting point.
- To facilitate the early start, guests need to overnight at One&Only Nyungwe House the night before their trek. (The earliest helicopter flight from Kigali International Airport only departs at 6am).



Gratuity guidelines

Tipping cultures are complex and subtle, and they differ from country to country. While staff at Singita certainly do not expect gratuities from guests, we are asked on occasion for tipping guidelines. Guests may wish to leave discretionary gratuities – either in cash or as a nominated amount added to their bill. Tips from the general staff gratuity pool are divided equally among chefs, housekeepers, front-of-house and back-of-house staff. Should guests wish to allocate a gratuity to a particular staff member, it is helpful if this is specified.

There are 3-4 Volcanoes National Park (VNP) Trackers per group, and at the end of guests' hour with the gorillas, when they return to the Park's headquarters, they stay behind with the gorilla family. Guests typically give one of the VNP Trackers a gratuity before leaving, which they then share.

** Please note that gratuity for Volcanoes National Park trekking guides, porters and trackers should be paid independently and in cash.*

A detailed breakdown of suggested gratuities can be found below:

POSITION	AMOUNT*
Driver Guide	From USD 30 per couple per day
VNP Trekking Guide	From USD 30 per couple per trek
VNP Trackers	From USD 20 per couple per trek
Waiter	From USD 35 per couple per day
General staff gratuity pool	From USD 45 per couple per day

VNP Porters

We strongly recommend the use of porters as their knowledge of the area and routes are invaluable – and they can assist you through slippery and tricky parts of the trek. Making the experience more comfortable, they can also help to carry belongings and retrieve items from your bag when needed. Starting from **USD 10 per person per trek**, porters' fees are their main source of income and make a real and tangible difference to the local economy