

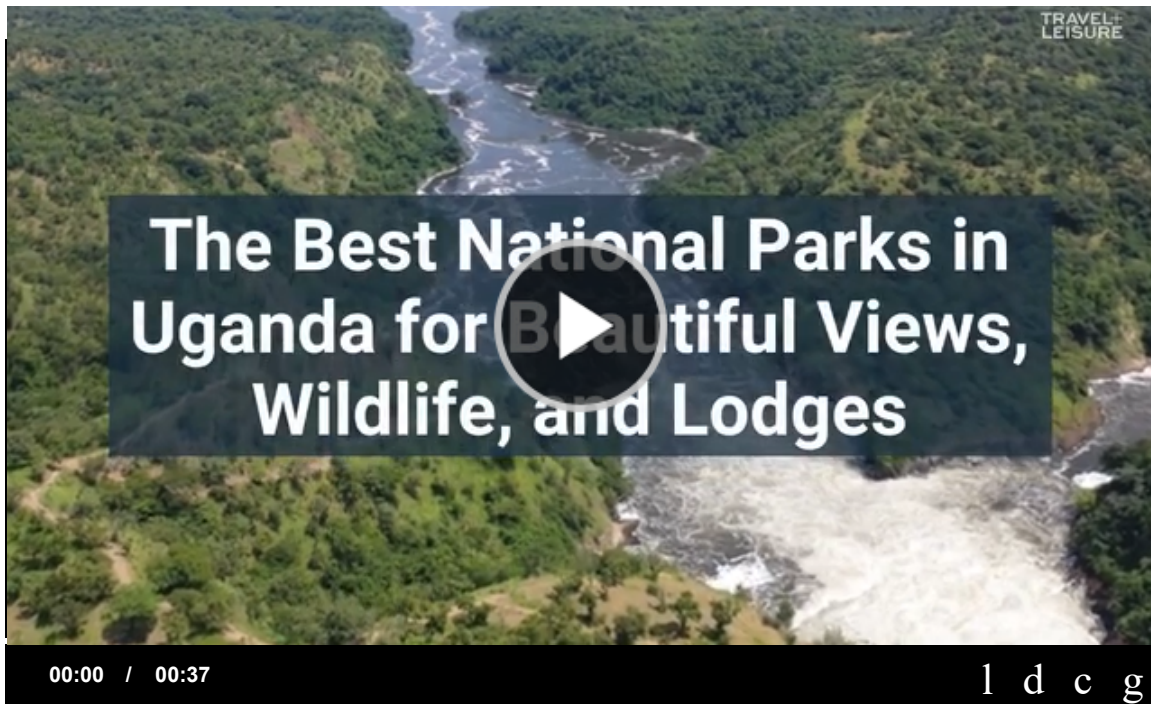


Travel + Leisure

## The Best National Parks in Uganda for Beautiful Views, Wildlife, and Lodges

Jaw-dropping landscapes and unforgettable wildlife experiences await at Uganda's best national parks.

BY TRAVIS LEVIUS | MAY 08, 2021



*Editor's Note: Those who choose to travel are strongly encouraged to check local government restrictions, rules, and safety measures related to COVID-19 and take personal comfort levels and health conditions into consideration before departure.*

There might be a silver lining to Uganda being so bafflingly underrated as a tourist destination: the chance to explore world-class natural attractions while dodging the masses seen in neighboring countries. Offering more than just gorilla trekking (though it's indeed phenomenal), the Pearl of Africa is home to a treasure trove of wildlife and soul-stirring landscapes, the best of which can be explored within the country's well-protected parklands.

With that in mind, here are four excellent national parks in Uganda — with corresponding lodges — to consider for your next East African adventure.

## Queen Elizabeth National Park



Few African parks can rival Queen Elizabeth's biodiversity, from its savannas and crater lakes to its dense forests and wetlands. Nearly 100 mammal species roam this equator-straddling park, which contains four of the Big Five animals. However, it's perhaps best known for its tree-climbing lions in southerly Ishasha. Other highlights include languid boat tours along the Kazinga Channel, where buffalos, elephants, and hippos coexist along the scenic banks, and the Kyambura Gorge, a sunken forest amid the savanna where nearly 30 endangered chimpanzees dwell.



## Where to Stay: Kyambura Gorge Lodge

Perched atop the lush Kyambura Gorge, this eco-luxury lodge from Volcanoes Safaris has community and conservation at its heart. Formerly a coffee estate, the recently upgraded resort features eight plush bandas and a bevy of activities, from beekeeping and village project tours to guided gorge hikes and twice-daily game drives in Queen Elizabeth.

## Bwindi Impenetrable Forest National Park



Rwanda might be the best-known destination for African gorilla trekking, but it is Uganda's Bwindi Impenetrable Forest that holds half of the world's gorilla population.

Intrepid travelers endure steep hikes along this UNESCO-listed park's verdant

slopes to find the world's largest primates, with many describing the journey and privileged encounter as "life-changing." To learn how indigenous, forest-dwelling peoples once lived in the park area, the Batwa Cultural Experience in neighboring Nkuringo is a must.

## **Where to Stay: Clouds Mountain Gorilla Lodge**

At nearly 7,000 feet above sea level, the aptly named Clouds is Uganda's highest inn and a top lodging choice for gorilla treks — it's situated a stone's throw from Bwindi's Nkuringo gate. Ten classic, high-beamed stone cottages dot the hillside, and on a clear day, seven Virunga volcano peaks reveal themselves for unforgettable views of Uganda and beyond.

## **Kipedo Valley National Park**





Bordering South Sudan and Kenya, Uganda's most remote national park is an off-the-beaten-path destination that's well worth the trek. Outstretched acacia trees dot the semi-arid landscape, filled with both familiar wildlife and animals you can't find anywhere else in the country, including cheetahs, aardwolves, and black-backed jackals. Its far-out location rewards travelers with minimal crowds and natural beauty that rivals that of more popular East African parks, such as the Maasai Mara and Serengeti.

### **Where to Stay: Apoka Safari Lodge**

For Apoka guests, a safari drive isn't required to see Kidepo's zebras, elephants, and warthogs (though it's highly recommended). These animals, drawn by a watering hole and abundant grassland, will come to you instead. There are arresting views for miles from the park's sole upscale lodge, best experienced from the granite-carved infinity pool or one's outdoor sunken stone bathtub.

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# Murchison Falls National Park



Uganda's largest national park offers more than its name suggests. Popular safari wildlife and the endangered Rothschild's giraffe cover the endless savanna, while 450 birds species and fearsome hippos line the Nile River, where tour boats glide through sedate, wide-mouthed waters. Its eponymous attraction, though, is among the most spectacular sights in Africa: the Victoria Nile squeezing through a bottlenecked gorge to create the world's most powerful waterfall. Take a hike to the top of the falls for up-close access to Uganda's best-known natural wonder.

## Where to Stay: Nile Safari Lodge

Nile Safari Lodge, a stylish, eco-conscious retreat along the banks of the iconic river, is an excellent base from which to explore the park's top attractions. Travelers can choose from accommodations that include solar-powered Deluxe Bandas and a two-bedroom Family Villa, which has its own private pool and expansive terrace.