Uganda: Fabulous Birds & Mammals
With Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures

February 5 – 15, 2020
w/ Kenya Extension Jan. 28 – Feb. 4
Murchison Falls Extension Feb. 15 – 18

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Naturalist Journeys, LLC
Join Naturalist Journeys on this exciting Uganda adventure. Uganda is fast gaining fame as a wonderful place to explore Africa, hosting a rich geography of wetlands, savannas, and montane rainforests associated with the Albertine Rift, a high plateau where Africa’s great rivers are born and 20+ endemic bird species can be found. From the shores of Lake Victoria to lush forests skirting the beautiful Virunga Volcanos, Uganda hosts both a rich bird and mammal fauna. It is a fascinating blend that we explore through a classic African safari with game drives. We also spend time exploring some of the best forests remaining on the continent; Uganda’s wild forest reserves are home to myriad beautiful birds, rare Mountain Gorilla, Chimpanzee, and other primates. The Gorilla and Chimpanzee treks on this trip are optional, but highly recommended!

Tour Summary
11-Day / 10-Night Uganda Safari with Pat Lueders & expert local guides
$4990, from Entebbe
Airport is Entebbe International (EBB)

Tour Highlights
✓ Explore the labyrinth of lagoons of Mabamba Swamp by canoe in search of Uganda’s iconic Shoebill
✓ Enjoy a game drive in Lake Mburo NP for views of Zebra, Impala, Eland, Topi, African Buffalo, and more
✓ See some of Africa’s most beautiful birds: turacos, barbets, bushshrikes, bee-eaters, and broadbills
✓ Enter Bwindi’s Impenetrable Forest NP, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, home to approximately half the world’s endangered population of Mountain Gorilla
✓ Discover Bwindi’s productive montane forest birding along the mountain spine of Africa—lush forests support 23 of Uganda’s 24 Albertine Rift endemic birds
✓ Visit Queen Elizabeth National Park on the Equator in search of Elephant, Spotted Hyena, Leopard, Lion, Ugandan Kob, Side-striped Jackal, Baboon, and other mammals, as well as abundant birds
✓ Take an exciting boat cruise on the Kazinga channel for excellent sightings and photo opportunities of wading birds and abundant Hippopotamus
✓ Find out why Kibale Forest National Park is the best safari destination for Chimpanzee tracking in East Africa, a place where up to 13 species of primates can be seen (and the bird list is 325 species!)
✓ Opt for our Kenya extension or
✓ Join our Murchison Falls extension for fabulous scenery on the Nile River, spectacular birding on the Lake Albert Delta, and more mammals; a short flights saves many hours of driving cross country

Itinerary

Wed., Feb. 5  Arrive in Entebbe, on the Shore of Lake Victoria
Several major airlines provide service to Entebbe, including United, Delta, Emirates, Ethiopian, KLM, and others.
Typical stops en route include your gateway through Brussels, Amsterdam, Nairobi, Addis Ababa, Doha, or Kigali. Note, you need to leave the day prior to arrival, February 4 departing the USA. If you wish to combine with another part of Africa, then Kenya or Ethiopia work well and in both we have partner companies that can provide guided custom excursions.

Today is planned as just a day of rest; for those arriving in time we gather for a welcome dinner at our hotel. For those that arrive early in the day, you can rest and enjoy birding on the grounds, or we may organize an optional excursion to the local botanic gardens as a group with a guide. The hotel is close to the airport, and provides dependable and convenient shuttle service.

For those that were on our Kenya extension or who come in early, you can opt to join a guided botanic garden tour today.

*Accommodations at the Boma Hotel, Entebbe (D)*

**Thurs., Feb. 6  **Mabamba Wetlands | Lake Mburo National Park**

After an early breakfast, we proceed to the Mabamba Swamp, a Wetland of International Importance, in search of water birds including Uganda’s iconic Shoebill. In this narrow bay, lined by papyrus, other specialty birds include Hamerkop, Lesser Jacana, Blue Swallow, Papyrus Gonolek, White-winged Warbler, Blue-breasted and Madagascar Bee-eaters, Gray-rumped Swallow, Greater Swamp-Warbler, Slender-billed Weaver, African Pygmy-Kingfisher, and Plain-backed Pipit. Waterbirds include African Pygmy-Goose, Spur-winged Goose, Long-toed Lapwing, Gray-hooded Gull, and three species of terns: Gull-billed, White-winged Black, and Whiskered. We may be lucky and find the giant of all herons, the Goliath. Raptors include the interesting Lizard Buzzard, and perhaps the Palm-nut Vulture. Mammal fans want to be on the lookout for Spot-necked Otter, occasionally seen in the water here.

Mabamba Swamp is a labyrinth of channels and lagoons. Even getting there holds exciting birding! The road to Mabamba winds its way through areas of secondary forest and agricultural land, attracting Red-headed Lovebird, African Crowned-Hornbill, and a range of sunbirds including the Green-headed, Green, Red-chested, Collared, Marico, and Scarlet-chested. The road ultimately ends at a papyrus reed-bed adjoining Lake Victoria, where by canoe we explore a maze of channels and mudflats for a reliable resident, the majestic Shoebill.

Then, in the afternoon we drive to Lake Mburo National Park. While small, this park has outstanding biodiversity, with numerous species of birds and an excellent array of large mammals including Burchell’s Zebra,
Impala, Elands, Topi, and Buffalo. Oribi can be found here, as well as Olive Baboon, and Waterbuck and Reedbuck that relish the lush habitat. Where grazing mammals occur, we find Yellow-billed Oxpecker as well.

The park contains an extensive area of wetland including lakes and marshes. Ancient Precambrian rock tells a fascinating geologic story. The bird population is rich, including Green-backed Woodpecker, African Finfoot, Brown-chested Plover, Southern Ground Hornbill, Spot-flanked, Red-faced and Black-collared Barbets, White-winged Warbler, Carruthers Cisticola, Papyrus Gonolek, Yellow-billed Oxpecker, and Northern Brown-throated Weaver. Gray-crowned Crane are often the photographers’ favorite.

After a full and rewarding day, we enjoy dinner and our comfortable lodgings. And keep on the lookout for nightjars!

*Accommodations at the Mantana Tented Camp, Lake Mburo (B,L,D)*

**Fri., Feb. 7  Mburo National Park: Full Day Birding, Game Drive & Boat Cruise**

We have the full day to explore the park today. With our expert guides, we look for birds and mammals. Search the skies for Tawny Eagle, Ruppel's Griffon Vulture, Grey Kestrel, and the differently-patterned male and female Bateleur. Feeding in trees we look for Ruppel's Starling, Brown Parrot, Grey Hornbill, White-browed Coucal, Northern Brubru, Black-headed Oriole; in and around their roots we may find Water Thick-knee seeking shade or Coqui Francolin busily feeding. Favorites for the day often include Shining Blue, Woodland, and Giant Kingfishers, Broad-billed Roller, and Little Bee-eater. With keen eyes we may spot a roosting Verreaux's Eagle Owl, a Greater Honeyguide, and associated with water, White-backed Night-Heron, Papyrus Gonolek, Lesser Masked Weaver, and Carruther’s Cisticola.

In more open savanna, dotted with acacias, we look for Senegal Lapwing and birds of the grasslands and scrub, including White-backed Scrub Robin, Plain-backed Pipit, Sooty Chat, Tawny-flanked Prinia, Red-faced Crombec, Chinspot Batis, Grassland Pipit, and Golden-breasted Bunting. Learn to sort out starlings today: Rupell’s Long-tailed, Greater Blue-eared, and Bronze-tailed.

We return to our upmarket tented camp for an enjoyable evening. Chefs take pride in our meals, and include fresh local foods in the menu. Enjoy drinks from the bar, and as night falls, sounds of the African night.

*Accommodations at the Mantana Tented Camp, Lake Mburo (B,L,D)*

**Sat., Feb. 8  Drive to Bwindi Impenetrable Forest National Park**

Today we start early after breakfast, with an exciting destination in mind—the Bwindi Impenetrable Forest. This is mainly a travel day, our drive time is 6 – 7 hours or more, depending on the stops we make for scenery and birding (and lunch) along the way.
Bwindi National Park is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is home to approximately half of the world’s endangered population of Mountain Gorillas. This vast reserve offers arguably 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 big conservation importance. We have several days here to enjoy the world-famous Mountain Gorillas (permit required, additional cost) and some spectacular birding.

Our lodge opened in 2014, with a mission to provide lodging for the park while supporting the local community. It is a small lodge, with wonderful hospitality.

Accommodations at Buhoma Community Haven Lodge, Bwindi (B,L,D)

Sun., Feb. 9  Gorilla Tracking in the Forest

For those that select the Gorilla tracking option, after an early breakfast, we report to the park headquarters for a briefing prior to the Gorilla tracking excursion. This activity may take anywhere from one hour to a full day, so a reasonable degree of fitness is required. The hike starts about 8:30 – 9:00 AM and we are back anytime of the day. It may be just an hour or several hours. It is a wonderful experience to stare into the eyes of these gentle giants; watch them in awe as they play and go about their daily activities. It is indeed a “once in a lifetime” experience. Each encounter is different and has its own rewards; we are likely to enjoy close view of adults feeding, grooming, and resting as the youngsters frolic and swing from vines in a delightfully playful display. Only a limited number of people are allowed in to see the family groups each day (we have two days and may split up between them), so the earlier you sign on the better. We forward your permit payment on with registration. The forest habitat is fascinating, with lush greenery and of course, a host of birds.

We hope that our whole groups opts for the gorilla trek; our visit supports their conservation and rangers work hard to pace the hike for you to have success in finding them. If you are not able to do the hike, or perhaps have seen them at another location, birding is plentiful and an alternate activity on this day. Also possible are short nature walks or a cultural visit.
Mon., Feb. 10  Birding Bwindi

Forest birding at Bwindi ranks the best birdwatching in Uganda and Africa as well, having been voted the number one hot spot in Africa. It is home to over 23 highly-localized Albertine Rift endemics. Our birding today takes place at different elevations, much of it in mid-montane forest.

The list of special birds is long! Sunbirds appear like our hummingbirds, but are songbirds that sing. We look for Blue-headed Sunbird, Northern Double-collared Sunbird, and Grey-headed Sunbird, Green-throated Sunbird, and Blue-throated Sunbird. Stunning and colorful are the Black-billed Turaco, Bar-tailed Trogon, Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater, Lagden’s Bush-shrike, Doherty's Bush-shrike, Montane Oriole, African Golden Oriole, and the smaller Oriole Finch. Flycatchers and other small birds of the forest include Black-faced Rufous Warbler, Grauer's Warbler, Banded Prinia, three species of Apalis: Black-throated and Mountain Masked, Red-throated Alethe, Yellow-eyed Black-Flycatcher, Ashy Flycatcher, Dusky-blue Flycatcher, Chapin’s Flycatcher, Chin-spot Batis, Rwenzori Batis, Black-and-white Shrike-flycatcher, White-bellied Crested-flycatcher, Mountain Illadopsis, and Dusky Tit.

Noisy are the African Hill-Babbler, Sooty Boubou, Pink-footed Puffback, and White-naped Raven. Starlings, various finches, sparrows, and weavers abound, including Stuhlmann's Starling, Narrow-tailed Starling, Waller's Starling, Strange Weaver, Brown-capped Weaver, Black-billed Weaver, Dusky Crimsonwing, Yellow-bellied Waxbill, Magpie Mannikin, Yellow-crowned Canary, Thick-billed Seedeater, Streaky Seedeater, and Shelly's Crimsonwing. Overhead, we look for two striking raptors, Mountain Buzzard and Ayre’s Hawk-eagle.


We could continue, but you can see from those species mentioned here that the area is rich! Extremely rare and likely tough to find, requiring more extensive hiking than we do, is the endemic African Green Broadbill.
We return to the hospitality of our lodge, to dine and enjoy the evening.

*Buhoma Community Haven Lodge Bwindi (B,L,D)*

**Tues., Feb. 11   Birding to Queen Elizabeth National Park**

Today we shall start early because it is a travel day, with a 5 – 6-hour drive to Queen Elizabeth National Park. We pass through the Ishasha sector of Queen Elizabeth National Park (known for its tree climbing lions), watching for mammals and birding along the way. We hope to find African Long Crested Eagle, Augur Buzzard, Mackinnon's Fiscal, Black-headed Waxbill, Black-and-white Mannikin, Senegal Coucal, Red-chested Cuckoo, Grey-capped Warbler, and other species.

The park is named after the Queen of England, who visited in 1954. It is the second largest national park in Uganda. In terms of diversity, this park ranks among the best birding destinations in Uganda with over 610 species recorded, and a one-day record of 296 species. Mammals include African Elephant, Spotted Hyena, Leopard, Lion, Ugandan Kobs, Side-striped Jackal, Baboon, Chimpanzee, Bush and Water Bucks, Warthog, and Giant Forest Hog to mention but a few. Specialty birds of this park include Harlequin Quail, Blue Quail, Small (Common) Buttonquail, African Crane, White-winged Warbler, Martial Eagle, African Skimmer, Verreaux's Eagle-Owl, Papyrus Gonolek, Amur Falcon, Ovampo Sparrowhawk, Lowland Akalat, Greater and Lesser Flamingo, Shoebill, Black Bee-eater, Caruthers's Cisticola, Terek Sandpiper, Secretary Bird, and Temminck's Courser.

Our lodge is at the gateway of the park, with fine views and good birding on the grounds. The main house has large windows in the dining area and a viewing deck, great for sundowners and dining.

*Accommodations at Enganzi Game Lodge, Queen Elizabeth National Park (B,L,D)*

**Wed., Feb. 12   Game Drive in the Park | Boat Cruise on the Kazinga Channel**

After breakfast we set out for a nearly full day game drive and birdwatching drive in the park. We save the active hours of late-afternoon for our exciting boat cruise on the Kazinga channel. The launch is one of the most exciting water activities in Uganda. The channel is a narrow neck of water that connects Lakes George and Edward, with excellent photo opportunities for waterside birds and abundant Hippopotamus. Amongst the birds we are likely to encounter African Skimmer, Striated Heron, African Spoonbill, Water Thick-knee, Three-banded Plover, Marsh, Green, Wood, and Common Sandpiper, Gray-headed Gull, Plain Martin, Lesser Swamp-Warbler, and following the mammals, Yellow-billed Oxpecker.

*Accommodations at Enganzi Game Lodge, Queen Elizabeth National Park (B,L,D)*
Thurs., Feb. 13  Birding to Kibale National Park
After breakfast, we drive to Kibale National Park, crossing the Equator with views of the mountains as part of our day. Kibale is the best safari destination for Chimpanzee tracking in East Africa. It contains one of the loveliest and most varied tracts of all tropical forests in Uganda. It hosts 13 species of primates, including the Chimpanzee. The population we see today is among the estimated 1450 chimpanzees, Uganda’s largest population of this endangered primate. It is also home to the rare L’hooest’s Monkey and East Africa’s largest population of the threatened Red Colobus Monkey. Other primates that you may see include the Black-and-white Colobus, Blue Monkey, Grey-cheeked Mangabey, Red-tailed Monkey, Olive Baboon, Bush Baby, and Potto.

Kibale’s lush forest cover predominates in the northern and central parts of the park. Kibale’s highest point is at the park’s northern tip, reaching just over 5000 feet above sea level. The park boasts 325 bird species, including six that are endemic to the Albertine Rift region. They include the Black-capped Apalis, Blue-headed Sunbird, Collared Apalis, Dusky Crimson Wing, Purple-breasted Sunbird, and Red-faced Woodland-Warbler. If we are lucky, we may also see the stunning African and Green-breasted Pitta, Black Bee-eater, Yellow-spotted Nicator, Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird, Little Greenbul, Black-eared Ground-thrush, Brown-chested Alethe, Blue-breasted Kingfisher, Abyssinian Ground-thrush, and perhaps the regal Crowned Eagle.

Our lodgings again have fine views of surrounding tea plantations in this fertile mountain setting. There are gardens and our rooms are in a colonial house where we can enjoy the bar and dining.

Accommodations at Chimpanzee Forest Guest House, adjacent to Kibale National Park (B,L,D)

Fri., Feb. 14  Kibale | Chimpanzee Tracking in the Forest
After an early breakfast we drive to Kibale National Park visitor center for a briefing and chimp tracking. The activity may last a few hours to several hours. It is an extraordinary experience, and we provide permits for all since hiking here is gentler than at Bwindi. Enjoy the antics of these fascinating chimps!

We also look for birds in the area, finding different species. Birding in the afternoon along the main road may be productive. Depending on the weather conditions, birding Bigodi Wetland is also productive for riverine forest birds. Kibale National Park is a good site for a number of birds that are hard to find elsewhere, including Speckle-breasted Woodpecker, Cabanis’s Greenbul, and Joyful Greenbul, as well as White-spotted Flufftail, Dusky and Olive Long-tailed Cuckoos, Lesser Honeyguide, Blue-shouldered Robin-chat, White-chinned Prinia, Grey Apalis, Olive-green Camaroptera, and White-collared Oliveback.
We have a final evening at the guest house, with time to review highlights from our journey. Some of our group may depart tomorrow, while others continue on for our Murchison Falls extension.

Accommodations at Chimpanzee Guest House, Kibale National Park (B,L,D)

Sat., Feb. 15  Departures | Murchison Falls Extension
Those not opting for the extension depart today from Entebbe, timed for evening flights out.

Those opting for the extension fly to Entebbe and on then proceed to Murchison Falls in the afternoon. You are picked up by the hotel driver.

Kenya Extension
Tues., Jan. 28  Arrival in Nairobi | Ole Sereni Hotel

After a long flight, our local guide and extension host Preston Mutinda has chosen a hotel for us that is a real treat. You are met at the airport and transferred to lovely, modern accommodations with a view of Nairobi National Park. Enjoy views of native animals from your room, the patio of the restaurant, bar, or swimming pool. This hotel is just minutes from the airport and away from the hustle and bustle of the city. As those in our group arrive at varying hours, plan on purchasing meals this first night; choose from the hotel’s excellent restaurant or its causal patio bar. Jetlag is real; some of us may just go to bed!

We can recommend flights if you wish to travel with other members of the group. There is also the option to arrive one night earlier (additional cost) to rest up from travels. If several choose to do this, we can offer optional activities that would include a chance to see Daphne Sheldrake’s Elephant Orphanage in the late morning as they feed the Elephants, followed by lunch and a visit to the Karen Blixen home and the adjacent Giraffe Manor, or a safari in Nairobi National Park.

Accommodations at Ole-Sereni Hotel, Nairobi

Wed., Jan. 29  Mountain Lodge, Mt. Kenya

This morning we leave Nairobi, driving north towards Mt. Kenya and our accommodations at Mountain Lodge. We arrive in time for lunch and to settle in and start watching wildlife come in to a waterhole, which is visible at several levels of the lodge. It’s an amazing experience to watch troops of Baboon, Bushbuck, Buffalo, and even Elephant at such close range.

This venerable lodge is one we’ve stayed at on all our Kenya journeys. Its view of spectacular Mt. Kenya, its location in lovely forest with trails, and its ambiance are hard to equal. The lodge works hard at maintaining a light ecological footprint in its prime location within Mt. Kenya National Park. African Buffalo are often at the waterhole, as are groups of Elephant, often with very new youngsters at their side. Bushbuck and Waterbuck approach carefully, always alert for Lion and other predators. Giant Forest Hog often come in at night. Close to the lodge, Spotted Genet often come in after dark, and guests must be careful not to invite Sykes Monkey into their room by leaving a window open!

In addition to mammals, we find some wonderful birds in the forests, and from the rooftop deck of our lodge. Birdlife International lists 55 trigger species for the area, including Mountain Buzzard, beautiful Hartlaub’s Turaco, Abyssinian Owl, Bar-tailed Trogon, Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater, six species of sunbirds, and others.

So what is this place like? We find a good description on Mountain Lodge’s website: “Raised on stilts above the forest canopy, a timbered drawbridge leads from the forest and up on to the wooden ‘decks’ of the lodge. Inside, the impression of having boarded a ship is perpetuated by a combination of log paneled walls, timbered game-viewing decks and winding stairs leading to a selection of snugly comfortable, cabin-styled rooms.”

Accommodations at Mountain Lodge, Mt. Kenya National Park (B,L,D)
 Thurs., Jan. 30  Mt. Kenya Area | Drive to Lake Nakuru National Park | Kenya’s Rift Valley | Flamingo Hill Camp

Knock, knock. It’s time to wake up in your tree-top lodge, for something special has been sighted at the waterhole! Throughout the night, lodge staff awaken guests (at their request) if unusual mammals come to the waterhole.

In the morning, we meet for coffee on the roof-top viewing area, watching sunrise on Mt. Kenya and a grand array of birds.

After breakfast, we join the lodge’s excellent naturalist for a walk in the forest nearby. Walk a comfortable trail under a lush canopy, just teeming with birds, and sometimes mammals, particularly squirrels and monkeys. Our focus is on natural history here; at this location we are in a habitat totally different than any other we visit on the journey. Species seen here, particularly the birds, are not likely encountered again.

After lunch, we drive a back route from Mt. Kenya over to Lake Nakuru, stopping at historic Thompson’s Falls along the way. We find great views as we descend into Kenya’s Great Rift Valley. Our accommodations tonight are inside Lake Nakuru National Park. The food here is lovely and we are right in the midst of wildlife. Fabulous Yellow-fever Acacia trees line the roads here, making for beautiful photography. We drive through the park en route to our lodgings, arriving at sunset to a very restful place.

*Accommodations at Flamingo Hill Tented Camp (B,L,D)*

Fri. Jan. 31  Nakuru National Park

We find Nakuru to be a lovely realm of forests, vast wetlands, and open meadows where wildlife roams—it’s just a delight to have time here. The Great Rift Valley is a stunning geologic feature and extensive agricultural area of Kenya.

Lake Nakuru is a large alkaline lake, surrounded by woodland and grassland. Lake Nakuru National Park is famous for Hippos and at times, astounding numbers
of Lesser Flamingo. It is one of Kenya’s earliest-established parks, and today is one of its Rhino Sanctuaries, with both Black and White Rhinos occurring. On a previous visit we were fortunate to have time with a White Rhino mother and calf, as well as have close views of a male Black Rhino on a separate drive. Rothschild’s Giraffe, plentiful Waterbuck, and warthog are here, along with a great variety of wildlife in the upland areas.

The lake and wetlands team with bird species including Pied Kingfisher, Hamerkop, African Fish Eagle, and rarer Goliath Heron. Over 450 bird species have been recorded here, and Birdlife International lists over 30 trigger species, including Little and Black-necked Grebes, African Spoonbill, Great White Pelican, Lesser Kestrel, Hempich’s Hornbill, Grey-crested Helmet-shrike, Bronzed and Golden-winged Sunbirds, and Purple Grenadier. Mammal viewing is equally good at Lake Nakuru National Park. Preston so artfully places us at the right spot for wildlife action, light for our images, and truly memorable times.

At Nakuru, we have another chance to see White Rhino and to observe the extraordinary tree-climbing Lions found here. Leopards have delighted our group in previous years, too.

Our tented camp here is an intimate one, with just 25 tents. We have electricity, lovely furnishings and textiles, and wonderful food and service, all while being as close to nature as possible.

Accommodations at Flamingo Hill Camp, Lake Nakuru National Park (B,L,D)

Sat., Feb. 1  Drive to Amboseli National Park
We take much of the day to drive to Amboseli National Park, tucked down by the Tanzania border. We take some rest stops, which in Kenya translates to a stop at a tourist shop if we want to find porcelain (vs. an African bathroom—a hole in the floor).

Handicrafts include wood carvings, beaded objects, soapstone carvings, batiks, musical instruments, and more. We have lunch at a restaurant along the way.
Outside the park, we see Maasai in their colorful, red traditional dress, and their boumas, which are clusters of mud-walled homes within a traditional ring of shrubs cut to make a safe enclosure for people and their cattle.

Entering Amboseli, the first impact is the stellar view of Mt. Kilimanjaro across extensive salt pans. Standing at 19,340 feet, this stunning mountain makes its own weather; afternoon clouds can hide the summit and then it can peek back through again.

We start seeing birds: Fischer’s Sparrow Lark, Red-capped Lark, African Harrier Hawk, Pale Chanting Goshawk, and of course, Lilac-breasted Roller with its kaleidoscope of twenty-seven colors. Impressive is just the physical beauty of Amboseli, which former clients have described as “quintessential Africa.” Giraffe and Elephant are common.

Our accommodations here are in comfortable tented cabins where we have full baths with showers, comfortable furniture, and a view facing the slopes of Kilimanjaro. The swimming pool is a great place to rest and bird, with African Pied Wagtail, colorful firefinches, and Chestnut Weaver taking drinks from the edge. White-bellied Go-Away-Bird, Speckled Mousebird, and incredibly bright Beautiful Sunbird may feed in flowering acacia trees all around.

After a break, we meet about 3:30 PM for a game drive, keeping our eyes open to spot a Fringe-eared Oryx, a fairly rare find of a range-restricted species here at Amboseli. Tall umbrella acacias frame views of Kilimanjaro. What typically steals the show for the afternoon is time with Elephants. It’s amazing to be so close to these giants. They spend time in the water, and when they emerge with their legs so dark against pale, mud-clad bodies, they are startling. The age mix of the herd makes for playful encounters; we have ample time to photograph, watch, and wait for things to happen. There are just SO many Elephants, surrounded by ample numbers of Grant’s Gazelle and Zebra. We make a loop drive, always scanning for Cheetah, Hyena, and more.
Dinner here is a buffet, with one of the choices being pizza made in a most ingenious oven—a circular stack of charcoal bins, each red hot and ready for a round pizza pan, delicious and made to order.

Accommodations near Amboseli National Park (B,L,D)

Sun., Feb. 2 & Mon., Feb. 3

Amboseli National Park—Morning & Afternoon Game Drives

Kilimanjaro is the source of water for myriad underground rivers and springs at Amboseli, and we visit two marshes, each a stunning oasis full of life. Enjoy watching herds of Zebra with young, the little ones frisky, and often hiding behind their moms. Watch herd dynamics; see the dominant female discipline another with just a short switch of her ears. You may be mesmerized by variations in the stripe patterns—particularly on their faces but also on their flanks and bellies.

Hippos lie sunken into the marshes. A variety of birds use them as perches: Cattle Egret, African Jacana, Glossy Ibises. We also see Egyptian Goose, African Spoonbill, Black-headed Heron, and impressive Goliath Heron, the latter being the world’s largest heron, standing up to five feet. Steppe and Martial Eagles may perch in view atop isolated trees, or we may find a crèche of Ostrich chicks guarded by wary parents.

We take a drive to a scenic lookout. Nearby, if the group wants to, we can visit a Maasai village, showing up unannounced other than by the dust of our vehicles coming over their hills. With us they share dances and songs, demonstrate making fire, and they may share a young medicine man’s discussion of herbs. Their homes are mud and dung huts, which are neatly placed in a continuous circle. Men show their skills at jumping high, while singing a guttural rhythm.

We have the opportunity to go inside the houses to see the cooking and sleeping areas, beds placed low to the floor with a mattress of thin cowhide. We meet several of the families and they welcome questions, which they patiently answer and occasionally laugh at.
You can buy bangles and beadwork and carvings, or even buy a pair of sandals made out of tires. The modern world has touched here, evidenced mainly by cell phones; nowadays they are as likely to take our photos!

We go back for lunch, take a break, then depart on the afternoon drive to position ourselves within view of long lines of elephants parading back from their day at the marsh, back to the wood where they rest, over vast stretches of open plain. Stunning! Amboseli National Park is the place of Cynthia Moss’ life work on Elephants and by the close of this day we clearly see how the place utterly captivated her.

**Accommodations near Amboseli National Park (B,L,D)**

**Tues., Feb. 4  Amboseli to Nairobi**
We depart Amboseli this morning and work our way up to Nairobi, about a four hour drive depending on traffic. Your driver takes you directly to the airport in Nairobi where you board a short, one-hour flight to Entebbe. Once landed you are met on arrival and transferred to the hotel, where you have the afternoon and evening at leisure, enjoying the hotel grounds and perhaps mingling with others from the main group who have arrived early.

**Accommodations at the Boma Hotel, Entebbe (B)**

**Murchison Falls National Park Extension**

**Sat., February 15  On to the Royal Mile!**
Today after some early birding followed by breakfast and packing up at our hotel in Kibale, we head on to the east, arriving late in the day to Masindi town. We break up the drive with birding stops and enjoy the scenery as we travel alongside Lake Albert.

Our hotel at Masindi is colonial style and while located in the city has nice plantings and a central courtyard/garden area with bar and dining.

**Accommodations at the Masindi Hotel (D)**

**Sun., February 16  Birding the Royal Mile of Budongo Forest**
We rise early to be in the lush forests of Budongo at dawn, when birds are singing. The area we visit today has tall trees and is known as the Royal Mile. Who can resist the chance to find a Chocolate-backed Kingfisher? This forest area is home to over 360 species of birds and brings a notable number of species from Central and Western Africa into the mix. We take a packed lunch to have as much of the
day here as possible. By visiting a mix of habitats, we may find Blue-breasted and Dwarf Kingfisher, White-spotted Flufftail, Puvell’s Illadopsis (unique here) Yellow-crested Woodpecker, a new variety of sunbirds and greenbuls, and overhead, possibly Crowned Eagle or Cassin’s Hawk-Eagle.

At day’s end we return to our hotel in Masindi and enjoy dinner in the garden area.

**Accommodations at the Masindi Hotel (B,L,D)**

**Mon., February 17**  
**Murchison Falls National Park**

We leave Budonga today and head on to Murchison Falls National Park. The two protected areas are quite different from one another yet in close proximity. From Masindi to the South Gate will be an hour’s or so. South of the river the park is quite forested, once across savanna opens up extensively, perhaps the most classic landscape of our tour if comparing to better known areas of Kenya and Tanzania.

Murchison Falls are on the White Nile River and are impressive for here as the Nile narrows, it pushes water through a narrow cleft. The drop is almost 150 feet, majestic and mesmerizing. The rocks below the falls are great habitat for Rock Pratincole which we look for on our boat trip along with colorful bee-eaters and more.

This is Uganda’s largest national park, impressive for both birds (over 450 species) and mammals (76 species). Many famous visitors, including Winston Churchill and Ernest Hemingway explored here. Many first knew of it from movie scenes in the film the African Queen, filmed here and starring Humphrey Bogart. Part of the park is on the shores of Lake Albert at the northern end of the Albertine Rift Valley. This is ecologically the most intact park in Uganda, with predators including Leopard and Lion.

Our lodgings here feature well-appointed rooms with private verandas. The dining area has a river view and an outside wood-fired pizza oven, quite a treat!

**Accommodations at Pakuba Safari Lodge (B,L,D)**

**Tues., February 18 & Wed., February 19**

**Two Full Days to Explore Murchison Falls National Park**

After early breakfasts each day, we have morning game drives. In the lush Borassus Palm savanna, we may be able to encounter Elephant, African Buffalo, Giraffe, and a variety of antelopes. With luck, we may also see Lion and Leopard is also possible. Birds of the grassland include the Secretary Bird, Abyssinian Roller, Black-bellied Bustard, and Abyssinian Ground Hornbill.

Each day we either enjoy a packed lunch or return to our hotel for a patio lunch, and then venture off on an afternoon boat trip. One is to the Lake Albert Delta. Here, we have another chance of sighting the rare Shoebill, particularly important if we miss them the first day at Mabamba. The variety of water birds here is dazzling, including species like Pied Kingfisher, Red-throated Bee-eater, Goliath Heron, Saddle-billed Stork, Sacred Ibis, Fulvous Whistling-Duck, Senegal Thick-knee, Black-headed Lapwing, Long-toed Lapwing, Little Bittern, and one familiar from back home, the Osprey. There are also good numbers of Nile Crocodile.

We also look for Red-necked Falcon, Blue-breasted Bee-eater, Vinaceous Dove, and Grosbeak Weaver. Other specialties include Buff-bellied Warbler, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird, Bar-breasted Firefinch, Red-winged Grey Warbler, Spotted Morning-Thrush, Maribou Stork, Red-throated Bee-eater, Silverbird, Beautiful Sunbird, Black-headed Gonolek, Speckle-fronted Weaver, Golden-backed Weaver, White-rumped Seedeater, White-crested
Turaco, Bruce’s Green Pigeon, Chestnut-crowned Sparrow-weaver, Carmine Bee-eater, White-rumped Canary, and more. Two impressive species are possible here: Pel’s Fishing Owl and Pennant-winged Nightjar.

Our lodge offers an option for a night drive, with a chance to see Serval Cat, Hyena, Leopard, and more. This is organized by a concession at an additional cost.

Accommodations at Pakuba Safari Lodge (B,L,D)

Thurs., February 20  Drive to Entebbe for Evening Departures

We organize flights out today, with a return to our hotel for a chance to repack and regroup in a hospitality room for the group if you wish. As flights vary in time you can wait here in the garden or while enjoying a nice meal.

If for any reason weather precludes our flight, it is five-to-six hour drive back to Entebbe, through traffic as we route through Kampala, but as most flights depart in the evening hours, we have time for a final morning of birding and a chance to freshen up and pack for our flights. (B,L)

Guide Pat Lueders

Pat Lueders has been leading birding trips in the St. Louis area and Midwest for over 10 years. A love of traveling has taken her to many countries of the world and most of the US, often with Naturalist Journeys' trips. When not out birding, she is the coordinator of volunteers for a number of Citizen Science projects partnering with many agencies including U.S. Fish & Wildlife, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, National Audubon, National Trumpeter Swan Society, and Missouri Department of Conservation. Pat serves on the boards of St. Louis Audubon & Audubon Society of Missouri and is on a bird banding team.
Cost of the Journey

Plan Ahead!
Protect yourself with Allianz Travel Insurance. Their website will show a grid of tour cost and your age category for you to make selections. As of January 2017, Naturalist Journeys pays 100% of your flight carbon offset.

Travel Information
Please plan to arrive at your convenience on February 5, 2019. Please note that flights originate from the United States on February 4. Please plan evening departures on February 14 if you are not opting for the extension, and evening departures on February 18 if you do plan to participate in the extension.

Cost of the Journey
Cost of the Journey is $4990 DBL / $5390 SGL, based on double occupancy, per person. The tour price includes airport transfers, 10 nights’ accommodations, all meals from dinner Day One through breakfast Day 11, professional guide services, park and preserve entrance fees, and miscellaneous program expenses. The Chimpanzee permits are included and arranged for the group.

Cost of the journey does not include airfare from your home to Entebbe, Uganda or items of a personal nature, such as drinks from the bar, telephone, and local guide gratuities (at your discretion, we will give some guidelines). Since the Gorilla hike requires more stamina, we make that optional, and the permit needs to be paid in addition to the tour cost, at present $600 (subject to change). Please pay this permit fee at registration to ensure you get a spot. Funds go to support Gorilla conservation.

Cost of the Murchison Falls extension is $2295 DBL per person, based on double occupancy. Cost of the Kenya extension is $3690 DBL / $4198 SGL per person based on double occupancy.

Photo Credits
Mountain Gorilla, Herbert Byaruhanga (HB); Shoebill, HB; Hippo, Peg Abbott (PA); Elephants, PA; Madagascar Bee-eater, PA; Spotted Hyena, PA; Lion, PA; Leopard, PA; Zebras, PA; Hamerkop, PA; Yellow-billed Oxpeckers, PA; Black-collared Barbet, PA; Gray Hornbill, PA; Gray Crowned Cranes, PA; Mountain Gorillas x4, HB; Green Sunbird, PA; Butterfly, HB; Abyssian Hornbill, PA; Secretary Bird with Snake, PA; Martial Eagle, PA; Lionesses, PA; Water Buffalo, PA; African Spoonbill, PA; Chimpanzee, HB; Malachite Kingfisher, PA; Rothschild Giraffes, pakubasafarilodge.com; Elephant, PA; Shoebill Storks, PA; Lionesse, PA; Orphan Elephant, PA; Elephant Parade, PA; Scenic, PA; Elephant and Baby, PA; Scenic, PA; Lake Nakuru Bird Life, PA; Giraffes Drinking, PA; Yellow-billed Stork Feeding, PA; Black Rhino, PA; Leopard, PA; Hamerkop, PA; Vervet Monkey, PA; Lilac-breasted Roller; Elephant Line Up by Greg Smith; Amboseli NP, PA; Nile Crocodile, PA; Sacred Ibis, PA; Maribou Stork, PA; Baby Elephant, PA; Peg Abbott, Bud Ferguson.

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