

A *CHIEPERS!* **AFRICA**

Rwanda - Birding amongst Gorillas February 21 - March 4, 2017



Day 1, Feb 21: Welcome to the beautiful land of “a thousand hills.” Your guide or driver will be at the airport to pick you and transfer you to hotel in the Capital Kigali.
O/N Flame Tree Hotel or similar (D)

Day 2, Feb 22: After a hearty breakfast, we set off for Akagera National Park in eastern Rwanda, on the border with Tanzania. We bird along the way with stopovers in marshy areas; species to expect include Cattle Egret, Hamerkop, Sacred and Hadeda Ibis, Augur Buzzard, Long-crested Eagle, and Pied Crow. There should also be brightly colored Weavers busy nest building, including Village, Black-headed (or Yellow-backed), and striking Vieillot’s Black Weavers or a White-headed Black Chat perched up. Small groups of Grey-backed Fiscals will be lining the fence poles while out in any marshy areas we’ll see bright Fan-tailed Widowbirds displaying, and Carruther’s Cisticolas flitting around the reeds.



Africa's CHEEPERS!

We can also look out for herds of African Buffalo, Impala, Zebra, Bushbuck and Reedbuck and African Elephants that prefer to stay near sources of water whilst feeding in the dense bush. The Hippopotamus are much more obvious by the water bodies.

O/N Akagera Game Lodge (BLD)



African Fish-Eagle

Day 3 & 4, Feb 23-24: We spend these two days exploring the varied habitats in the park, which is home to about 500 bird species and other wildlife. A boat trip on Lake Ihema brings us close to a variety of herons, African Fish Eagles, Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters and egrets, including the striking Rufous-bellied Heron which breeds here. Amongst the dense papyrus we look out for Lesser and possibly Greater Swamp Warblers, Slender-billed Weavers, and the dainty Swamp Flycatcher.

The wetlands species will include Goliath, Black-headed, Striated, and Squacco Herons, Little Bittern, Grey Crowned Crane, African Open-bill, African Darter, Black Crake, African Wattled Plover, Long-toed and Senegal Lapwings, Water Thick-knee, Blue-headed Coucal, and Giant Kingfisher.

A CHEEPERS! AFRICA

Amongst the savannah and forests, we will look out for Black-chested, Brown, and Western Banded Snake Eagles, White-headed Vulture, Black-bellied Bustard, Red-necked Spurfowl, Ross's Turaco, Black-collared and Red-faced Barbets, Bennett's Woodpecker, Bare-faced Go-away Bird, and Klaas's, Red-chested and Black Cuckoos. Flocks of Red-billed Quelea, Cardinal Queleas, and Sooty Chats can be very common.

O/N Akagera Game Lodge (BLD)

Day 5, Feb 25: After our morning breakfast, we'll have our birding and game drive on the lakes circuit via Muhana plain on our way to Kirara plain where we should easily see all the larger mammals of the park and stunning species of birds including Grey Crowned Crane, Saddle-billed Stock, etc. Late afternoon we drive on to Kigali.

O/N Flame Tree Hotel or similar (BLD)



Saddle-billed Stork

Day 6, Feb 26: Leave for Nyungwe forest with various stopovers; search the papyrus near Nyabarongo River for birds such as White-winged Warbler, Papyrus Canary, and Papyrus Gonolek. Stop by roadside marshes to look for Grauer's Swamp Warbler before reaching our lodge.

O/N Gisakura Guest House (BLD)

Day 7 & 8, Feb 27-28: Nyungwe forest is part of largest expanse of montane forests left on the African continent and an area rich in birds, including most of the Albertine Rift endemics. We'll search for Handsome Francolin, Great Blue and Ruwenzori Turacos, White-headed Wood-hoopoe, Barred Long-tailed Cuckoo, Chestnut Owlet, Olive and Elliot's Woodpeckers, Stripe-breasted Tit, the remarkable Red-collared Babbler, Archer's Robin Chat, White-bellied Robin Chat, Doherty's Bush-Shrike, Mountain Masked, Black-faced, Chestnut-throated, and Collared Apalises, Rwenzori Batis, Neumann's Short-tailed Warbler, White-tailed Blue-flycatcher, Chapin's Flycatcher, and Purple-breasted and Regal Sunbirds, to mention a few.

Birding in this lush, dense forest will present its challenges but the rewards are great. Look out for the Black-and-white Casqued Hornbills, Cinnamon-chested Bee-eaters, Pink-footed Puffback, African Hill Babbler, Dusky Crimsonwing and Grauer's Warbler in the undergrowth.



There will be lots of other wildlife to see as well. Chimpanzees live here – we can organize for Chimpanzee tracking as part of itinerary. We are more likely to see L’Hoest’s or Blue Monkeys, or Boehm’s Squirrel and several species of butterfly.

O/N Gisakura Guest House (BLD)

Day 9, Mar 1: We spend the morning walking another forest trail and then after lunch we set out on our journey north, driving part of the way along the shores of Lake Kivu and breaking our journey with a night on the lakeshore at Kibuye.

O/N Cormoran Lodge or similar (BLD)

Day 10, Mar 2: Drive to Parc National des Volcans. The Virunga volcanoes region shared between Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Uganda represents one of the richest biological areas of the world. It was here that Diane Fossey began her research into Mountain Gorillas in the late 1960’s. A short stop at a small patch of forest may yield sightings of Narina’s Trogon or White-eyed Slaty Flycatcher.

O/N Mountain Gorilla View Lodge or similar (BLD)

Day 11, Mar 3: Today we trek the dense jungles of the Virunga ranges in anticipation of meeting a group of Mountain Gorillas. We embark on the trek through the habitat of these enormous animals after a briefing at the visitor’s center. Such an unforgettable experience places high on many people’s bucket lists. The trek can last from an hour to seven hours depending on where the gorillas nested the previous night – you need to be relatively fit to enjoy this experience. Once located, we spend one hour with these magnificent animals.

Please note: Although the operators state that the trek to find gorillas can be as much as 7 hours, it is typically much less than that. Furthermore, once we’ve begun the trek, if any participant feels they cannot or would rather not continue, we will have multiple guides available to accompany you back to the lodge.

How we spend the rest of the day depends on what time we get back from our Gorilla trek, but we expect to have a late lunch and then spend the rest of the afternoon ‘taking it easy’ in the lodge grounds. Here the dense vegetation surrounding our accommodation holds a variety of birds.

O/N Mountain Gorilla View Lodge or similar (BLD)



Day 12, Mar 4: After birding around and near the lodge area, we set out on the return trip to Kigali, arriving in time for the flight back home or on to the Tanzania tour that begins tomorrow, March 5.

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PRICE INCLUDES:

- ~ Lodging in comfortable hotels/lodges
- ~ Meals as indicated
- ~ Bottled water throughout tour
- ~ All ground transportation, transfers, entrance fees
- ~ Services of an expert local birding guide and 2 *Cheepers!* Tour Leaders
- ~ Pre-trip gift package, customized checklist, post-trip photo disk/flash drive

PRICE DOES NOT INCLUDE:

- ~ International airfare
- ~ Visa
- ~ Alcoholic drinks
- ~ Travel insurance (highly recommended)
- ~ Gratuities (optional)
- ~ Expenses of a personal nature such as laundry, phone calls, extra drinks and snacks, etc.

Cancellation policy:

Cancellation must be made in writing (email or snail mail)

More than 6 months prior to departure – full refund of deposit

Between 4 and 6 months prior to departure – 50% refund of deposit

Less than 4 months prior to departure – No refund of deposit

If cancellation occurs after full payment is made, a refund will be given only if the vacant spot is filled.

Trip insurance is recommended.

You can compare prices offered by various trip insurance companies at these websites:



<https://www.insuremytrip.com/?linkId=ER791460>

http://www.quotewright.com/?sub_id=6056

Cheepers! Birding on a Budget LLC reserves the right to make changes in the itinerary if the need should arise due to unforeseeable circumstances such as weather, landslides, and other natural phenomena, as well as suggestions by local guides in order to take advantage of an unusual birding opportunity. Lodging is subject to change based on availability.