**MOUNTAIN RWENZORI NATIONAL PARK-UGANDA**

Mountain Rwenzori National Park is one of the high altitude and oldest protected areas in Uganda, the park is situated in south-wester corner of Uganda in the districts of Kasese, Kabarole and Bundibugyo next to DR Congo’s Virunga National Park along the border of DRC and Uganda. The park has an area coverage of 386 sq. mi (1000 sq. km), the main attraction in Mountain Rwenzori National Park are the Mighty Mountain Rwenzori ranges it’s also where the park derives its name from, the ranges are namely Mount Stanley’s peak Margherita ( 16,762 feet) is the 3rd highest point in Africa followed by Mount Speke as the 4th Africa’s highest point and Mount Baker id the 5th other mountain ranges apart from the three mentioned are Mount Gessi, Mount Luigi da Savoia and Mount Emin Pasha. The park is also of cultural importance for the neighboring communities, it has eighteen sacred sites designated and protected for worshipers.

Mountain Rwenzori also known as the Mountain of the Moon is Uganda’ s highest point and Africa’s 3rd highest point and largest mountain. The mountain boasts mountain ranges, several lakes (over 20 lakes), beautiful water falls, glaciers, and vegetation cover varying with variation in altitude. The mountain’s distinctive vegetation cover zones with unique flora species that differentiates it from other African Parks, the vegetation vary with difference in height like Montane Forest, Bamboo Forest, Tree heath-bog, Hagenia-Rapanea Scrub and lastly Afro-Alpine Moorland making it one of the few uniquely beautiful and gifted National Parks in Uganda.

Mountain Rwenzori National park was declared a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1994 because of its rare plants, mountain, hot springs, Glaciers, Lakes, Rivers, waterfalls, wildlife and Natural beauty. The slopes of Mountain Rwenzori are where over 70 mammal and 177 recorded bird species call home. Wildlife namely Elephants, Duikers, Bush Babies, Bush babies, Rwenzori otter, Leopards, Giant Forest hog, the rare three horned male chameleon while the female has none only found in Uganda, Rwanda and DRC, a number of primates in the park include Blue Monkeys, Baboons, Angola Colobus, Black and White Colobus Monkeys, Chimpanzees to mention but a few. Bird Species include Blue-headed and Golden sunbird, Lagden’s Bush Shrike, Archer’s Robin-Chat, Rwenzori Turaco, Long Eared Owl, Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater, White Starling among others.

**HISTORY**

Mountain Rwenzori National park was gazetted in 1991 and four years late3r in 1994 it was declared a UNESCO World Heritage site. In 1997 rebels occupied the park up to 2001 and due to lack of resources and insecurity it was declared a UNESCO World Heritage site under danger in between 1999- 2004.

**ATTRACTIONS AND ACCTIVITIES IN RWENZORI NATIONAL PARK**

**Mountain Climbing**

Hiking mountain Rwenzori is organized to World Class Standards, most of the world’s best hikers have hiked Mountain Rwenzori. Hiking up to the 3rd highest point of Africa “mount margarita” is one of the best activities in the world but inexperienced hikers may find it extremely tiring going up to the snow-capped peak. Short and less tiring hikes can be arranged for the unexperienced hikers, Hikes on the mountain are only arranged by the Rwenzori Mountaineering Services.

Hiking to the three highest peaks of Mountain Rwenzori take 9 days and there are only two hiking trails used on the mountain namely the Central circuit trail starts at Mihunga and takes 7 days to reach on one of the peaks. Second trail is the Kilembe Trail starts from kilembe near kasese town and takes 5 days to reach one of the three peaks, this route is hard to hike but offers rewarding views and experiences offers views of the vegetation zones and glacier peaks.

**Foot hill and Forest hiking**

The park offers a number of activities for unexperienced hikers like hiking in the forest and along slopes of the mountain other activities like Hand Fishing can be arranged.

Hikes in the forest offer a number of sightings including the rare reptiles like the three horned chameleon.

**Birdwatching**

Mountain Rwenzori National park was declared a key birding area by UNESCO, the area home to over 177 bird species namely Crimson Wings, Evergreen Forest, Flycatchers, Scarlet-tufted Malachite Sunbird, Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater, Rwenzori Batis, Rwenzori Turaco, Western Green Tinkerbird, Olive-back and White Starred Robin, Slender-billed Starling among others.

**Cultural experience**

Visiting locals is one of the best Africa Safari experiences, a chance to visit one of the tribes living on the foot hills of the mountain like the Bakonzo, other cultural experience is to for the Bulemba-Ihandiro Cultural Trail to explore more about the intriguing culture of the Bakonzo people, visit traditional healers, local blacksmith, taste local dishes, storytelling, visit the Bakonzo traditional Museum among others.

**NATURE WALKS**

**HOW TO GET TO RWENZORI MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK**

The park can be reached by either road or Air transport;

**By Road;**

**The park is approximately 300km via the Kampala -Mubende - Fort portal-Kasese road.**

**By Air;**

A charted flight can be arranged from Entebbe International Airport or the Kajjansi airstrip to Kasese Airstrip for about 2 and a half hours then your guide driver with take you for a short drive to either your accommodation or Park HQ.

**ACCOMMODATION IN RWENZORI MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK**

Tourist shouldn’t worry about where to rest while on a safari in Mountain Rwenzori National park because the park has a number of accommodation facilities ranging from budge, Mi-range to Luxury like Hotel Margherita, Rwenzori International Hotel, Katara Lodge, Equator Snow Lodge, Tours Holiday Inn, Tropical Savannah Guest House, Ruboni Community Camp, Rwenzori Turaco View Campsite, Mihunga Safari Lodge, Ihama Lakeside Safari Lodge among others.

**WHATS THE BEST TO VISIT MOUNTAIN RWENZORI NATIONAL PARK**

Mountain Rwenzori National Park welcomes tourists all year round, though just like other parks the bets time to visit is during the dry months of late June to September and December to Late February this is when the rains are low which implies that the roads are less muddy and slippery, vegetation cover is thin easing hiking and wildlife viewing , the hiking trails are less slippery and less likely to rain.