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ISSUE 1

UGANDA
Uncovered!

Magazine

TOURISM & CONSERVATION

Uncovering
beauty in
our backyard
Explore the Pearl of Africa

The Wealth
of African culture
Ewaffe Cultural Village



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magazine

A Dying Wish

Patrick's Choice
By Viola Odinyaru Bayo

Display of Colors

Discovering the enchanting
Butterflies of Uganda

Entebbe Airport

Magnificent upgrade for the
best customer experience



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Lilly Ajarova

CEO, UGANDA TOURISM BOARD



With our new identity, we hope to tell the stories of the past, capture the stories of the present, and write the stories of the future.

Ours is not just a logo, but an identity that tells the story of a place and its people.

EXPLORE
UGANDA
THE PEARL OF AFRICA



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Editor's Note

Julius Luwemba

Uganda, the Pearl of Africa is a gem vibrating with diversity and spectacular natural beauty. It is endowed with over 18,783 species of fauna and flora located across a spectrum of stunning landscapes and distinct ecosystems. These have provided for a variety of tourism products and sightings. The country hosts over 50% of the world's remaining population of the Mountain gorillas, 11% of the world's recorded species of birds and 8% of the global mammal diversity. 19% of Africa's Amphibian species plus 14% of Africa's reptile species and 1,249 recorded species of butterflies are found in Uganda. We can confidently say that we live in the most beautiful country in the world.

However, even with such richness, our communities are yet to appreciate the beauty that we hold as a country. The laxity to appreciate the country's endowments, is further compounded by the unwillingness to engage in the naturally existing spectacles, owing to ignorance and undirected perceptions of luxury towards the same.

The results of this have only contributed to a slow growth towards domestic tourism and sometimes uncontrolled wrath towards wildlife itself in the case of Human-Wildlife conflict. As such, the expected conservation efforts from every Ugandan, are not realised, and whereas many efforts have been made towards this cause by several organisations, a significant gap remains.

It is against this background that Uganda Uncovered tailors concerted efforts towards the sensitisation and engagement of the domestic communities to change their perspective towards tourism. We hope to instill and inculcate an enduring impression towards nature and tourism in the hearts of Ugandans.

To achieve this, Uganda Uncovered engages in a series of activities such as The Travel Writing Competitions, which has majorly birthed this Magazine. This First Edition gives a snippet of Uganda Uncovered and the Travel Writing Competition, highlighting some of the outstanding stories submitted in the past editions of the Competitions. Most of the content in form of text and visuals, has been submitted by respective individuals whose bylines are attached thereto. It is one outlet showcasing the talent of young writers and photographers, always willing to tell beautiful narratives of their motherland-Uganda.

The stories depict individual experiences within and around respective attractions across Uganda, as submitted by some of the participants. More stories will be shared in subsequent Editions. Enjoy the ride.

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UGANDA UnCovered!



Irene Allen Namisango with singer John Blaq and Barnabas Tusingwire the Tourism Police boss

Uganda Uncovered is a destination promoting enterprise managed by a group of young tourism enthusiasts, aiming at the promotion of Uganda's tourism both domestically and internationally. It is a youth movement visioned at positioning Uganda as a universally recognised tourism destination, working hard everyday to build the best brands offering captivating experiences that drive long term destination loyalty to promote tourism that impacts communities and fellow youths. Through our different initiatives, we have engaged more than 700 youths in Uganda's Tourism space

What we do?

Being a destination promoting enterprise, we do quite a number of activities that all lead to one direction: Selling destination Uganda to verily say **UGANDA UNCOVERED**.

Uganda Uncovered Merchandise: We promote

Uganda through print. We print t-shirts, caps, vests, jumpers, bags and everything that is printable with national colors to see that we spread Uganda's pride. The wording Uganda uncovered simply means that Uganda has been exposed. Anyone wearing a Uganda Uncovered branded material means they have some information about the country and can proudly share it out. This explains the "Ask me about Uganda" tagline behind/beneath the wear.

Online Tourism Information Centre: Recognizing the importance of accessibility and information dissemination in the digital age, Uganda Uncovered operates a comprehensive Online Tourism Information Centre. This virtual platform serves as a one-stop destination for individuals seeking detailed and up-to-date information about Uganda's tourism offerings. From travel tips and cultural insights to destination guides and accommodation recommendations. The Information Centre ensures that both local and international audiences have easy access to the



wealth of knowledge necessary for planning their Ugandan adventures. The platform is designed to be user-friendly, making it a valuable resource for tourists, travel enthusiasts, and industry professionals alike.

We also specialize in crafting captivating content tailored for hotels, tour companies, and all facets of the tourism and hospitality sector. With expertise in both written and visual storytelling, we lead the charge in destination marketing and spotlighting Uganda's diverse attractions. From showcasing luxurious accommodations to highlighting unique experiences, our mission is to inspire travelers worldwide to explore the beauty and wonders of Uganda. We have readily available content bank from the Travel Writing Competition and Tourism Photo Exhibition.

Uganda Uncovered also hosts annual travel writing competitions with a rationale to increase marketing content about Uganda while promoting tourism destinations and influence at the same time. The competition gives chance to youth travel writers, to pen their experiences

around Uganda in a positive angle towards promoting Tourism. The best writers have fully paid up trips to any of Uganda's destinations. In the past 3 editions that we have held, the numbers of participants have been doubling, from 54 in 2021 to 117 in 2022 to 206 submissions in 2023. Every competition is rounded up with a training for 100 travel writers. However, consequently the numbers have been overwhelming as last year we received 300 applications for the travel writing training, yet we could only train 100 writers. We use these accumulated stories for the online Tourist information to provide reliable and authentic tourism information to our audience.

We also have the **Youth Travel Writers' Hub-Uganda** which offers ongoing travel writing workshops, both physical and online. It's designed to help interested travel writers discover and nurture their talents and skills. It is open to all youths who have dreamt of writing. Participants provide the desire to write and willingness to learn. We then provide the knowledge, the technical know-how, the professional feedback and a welcoming environment that enables them reach their full potential. The Youth Travel Writers Hub-Uganda helps the young generation become stronger, more resourceful writers and more knowledgeable of what makes a beautiful piece of a creative writing article satisfying to a reader and reaching a full range of their emotions and imaginations about Uganda. All

participants of the Travel Writing Competition interested in further writing skills, automatically become members of the hub. For the two years since its inception, we have a membership of 126 aspiring writers.

Tourism Photo Exhibition: *Uganda Uncovered* proudly hosts an annual Tourism Photo Exhibition, a visual celebration of the country's diverse landscapes, wildlife, and cultural richness. This captivating showcase allows both amateur and professional photographers to contribute to the narrative of Uganda's beauty. The exhibition serves as a powerful tool for raising awareness and enticing potential travelers by offering a vivid glimpse into the country's unique charm. Through the lens of photographers, *Uganda Uncovered* strives to convey the essence and allure of Uganda, encouraging a deeper appreciation for its hidden gems.

Uganda Uncovered also conducts tourism walks and trips to new places and those whose stories are less told. The walks we have had like the Makerere University Tourism walk, the Kampala monument walk, and the Royal Mile walk which got the Kabaka Anjagala road launched as a tourism attraction, have attracted more than 200 guides, tour operators and tourism students.

We also have a young women empowerment movement dubbed HERTIME CHAT SERIES. This is a chat series held every 8th March reminding young ladies that it's their time to take on leadership positions; and their time to be as strong as they were created to be. Young ladies gain more skills and empowerment to take on Uganda with every effort they can. We intend to inculcate in the young ladies, confidence while talking about where they come from.

What makes us different?

Uganda Uncovered Merchandise: Our initiative stands out by championing Uganda's tourism through vibrant, uniquely designed prints featuring the national colors. These prints are not only visually appealing but also serve as conversation starters, thanks to our distinctive tagline "Ask Me About Uganda." We've ensured affordability across all socio-economic classes, making it accessible to everyone who wants to showcase their love for Uganda.

Online Tourism Information Centre: Setting itself apart, our platform provides a comprehensive source of reliable and authentic information on Uganda's attractions, accommodations, amenities, travel news, and activities. We prioritize real-time updates to keep our audience informed, aiming to make tourism information

easily accessible to all individuals seeking to explore Uganda.

Annual Travel Writing Competitions: Our innovative approach aims at cultivating a community of passionate travel writers dedicated to promoting Uganda. Recognizing the timeless value of literature, we organize annual competitions to document and celebrate the diverse tourist destinations within the country. By nurturing a pool of talented writers, we contribute to the enrichment of Uganda's tourism narrative.

Destination Promotions and Content Creation: Through strategic partnerships formed during our annual competitions, we curate high-quality, meticulously crafted content that showcases Uganda's attractions. Our content developers, including esteemed travel writers, ensure that the content is not only readily available for purchase but also adaptable to meet the demands of various promotional campaigns. This ensures that we remain a reliable source for captivating content, delivered efficiently to promote Uganda's tourism offerings.

Annual Tourism Photo Exhibitions:

Our annual tourism Photo Exhibitions not only provide a visual journey through Uganda's hidden gems but also serve as a platform for talented photographers to showcase their work while promoting the country's tourism potential. These exhibitions offer photographers the opportunity



to display their artistry and monetize their talent through photo auctions, where their prints can be sold to interested buyers. This dual purpose of promoting tourism and supporting local photographers underscores our commitment to fostering both artistic expression and economic empowerment within Uganda's tourism industry.

Tourism Walks: Our guided tourism walks not only offer immersive experiences to uncover the hidden treasures of Uganda but also serve as a catalyst for introducing tour guides to new sites, thereby giving these destinations increased visibility. Led by knowledgeable guides, these walks take participants off the beaten path to explore scenic trails, historical sites, and local communities, providing a fresh perspective on Uganda's rich cultural and natural heritage. These walks have attracted over 400 tourism enthusiasts, including tourism students, tour guides, promoters, content developers, and tour consultants, fostering a vibrant community of individuals passionate about promoting Uganda's tourism offerings. Through these walks, we aim to not only showcase the diverse beauty of Uganda but also empower individuals to become advocates for sustainable tourism practices and destination promotion.



WHAT WE DO?

- Uganda Uncovered Merchandise
- Online Tourism Information Centre
- annual travel writing competitions
- Youth Travel Writers' Hub-Uganda
- Tourism Photo Exhibition

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Message from the Team Leader



**Irene Allen
NAMISANGO**
Team Lead

The inception of Travel Writing Competition marked a significant turning point for the tourism industry. The inaugural competition, held in 2021 during the global COVID-19 lockdown, was a proactive measure aimed at revitalizing the tourism sector, which had been severely impacted by the pandemic. The underlying premise was straightforward: if physical travel was restricted, then let's transport people to distant locales through the power of the written word.

Amidst the uncertainty and restrictions imposed by the pandemic, the competition provided a creative outlet for aspiring writers and seasoned travelers alike. It offered a platform for individuals to share their experiences, insights, and adventures from past journeys, as well as to dream about future destinations. By harnessing the evocative capabilities of storytelling, the competition sought to reignite the spirit of exploration and discovery that lay dormant during the pandemic-induced hiatus.

As participants penned their narratives, they painted vivid portraits of far-flung landscapes, bustling cities, and remote corners of the country. Through their words, readers were transported on virtual voyages, immersing themselves in the sights, sounds, and sensations of unfamiliar

OUR TEAM



Julius Luwemba



Shaminah Kantono



Edwin Kanyesigye



Jonan Katende



Lyton Namata



**Martha Ndagire
Nakato**



places. The competition not only showcased the diversity and richness of Uganda's travel experiences but also fostered a sense of connection and solidarity among travel enthusiasts worldwide.

Beyond its immediate impact, the travel writing competition emerged as a catalyst for change within the tourism industry. It underscored the enduring power of storytelling as a tool for promoting destinations, fostering cultural exchange, and inspiring wanderlust. Moreover, it highlighted the resilience and adaptability of tourism professionals in the face of adversity, demonstrating their ability to innovate and find new ways to engage audiences.

In the years that followed, the competition continued to grow in stature and influence, attracting participants from different regions of the country and garnering widespread acclaim. The rapid growth in submissions from 54 in the inaugural edition of 2021 to 117 in 2022 and then to 206 in 2023 for the third edition underscores the surging interest among youths in travel writing.

This escalating trend signifies a burgeoning enthusiasm among young writers to delve into the captivating world of travel narratives. It reflects not only a growing passion for exploration and cultural exchange but



also a desire to share these experiences with a wider audience. As the competition continues to attract more submissions, it serves as a beacon for aspiring travel writers, offering them a platform to express their wanderlust, creativity, and unique perspectives on the diverse tapestry of the world.

The Travel Writing Competition has become a beacon of hope and inspiration for Uganda's travel industry grappling with the challenges of recovery and rebuilding. Through the enduring legacy of the travel writing competition, the spirit of exploration and adventure endured, transcending boundaries and uniting people in their shared love of travel.

Riham

Freshness
you can taste



Travel Writing Competition in the face of all-time Participant

Paul Mukama has participated in two series of the Travel Writing Competition since inception in 2021. Whereas he's yet to carry the accolade, he has been among the top 20 participants during each edition. He shares his experience in regard to the competition.

I have so far participated in two editions of the Uganda Travel Writers competition and on both occasions, I've made it to the top twenty shortlist. For the 2021 edition, I was the second runner up. The competition has been an electrifying portal to a journey that I would never have imagined. I have met other talented writers who do not only excite you but in equal measure challenge you. I have been introduced to mentors like Julius Jonso Luwemba who I had been following for years. He was able to share some nuggets of wisdom in person at one of the training sessions organised by Uganda Uncovered in partnership with Uganda Tourism Board (UTB). The competition has organised some exclusive experiences like the cultural tour at Ewaffe Cultural Village and also the behind-

the-scenes experience at Uganda Wildlife Conservation Educational Center (UWEC), where I got to see and smell lions up-close. Feeding the Rhinos and the giraffe has also been a highlight of my life. If it is true that when you die, your life flashes in front of your eyes, I am excited these are some of the memories I will be treated to.

I keep participating in the Travel Writing Competition because of my unrelenting desire to win it. But most importantly, I am inspired to write about Uganda. I truly believe Uganda is the number one tourist destination in the world but we don't market ourselves to the maximum. There are countries that have one single attraction but rake in more tourist than Uganda because they are marketed extremely well. For the case of Uganda, we have a buffet of options; food, wildlife, weather, historical attractions, game parks, waterfalls, culture and much more. This fuels the flame inside me to keep writing. If we don't share the story of Uganda, the story will always remain untold.

A Dying Wish

Patrick's Choice

By Viola Odinyaru Bayo



Every journey is special, whatever purpose. I've never gone on a tour all my life, intended. But I've seen Uganda's beauty from the small square glass window of my usual California bus. Booked meticulously to secure a window seat on the two seater side, just for view of the lustrous countryside we will be passing through. Well, this one journey I call an extraordinary goodbye fills me with bittersweet pain and it inspired this article.

Not my usual bus journey, rather a well-equipped ambulance facilitating the safe travel of my comatose, dying big brother back home. We had spent four good months and three weeks hauling him around Kampala for treatment of his liver cancer. He loved nature and the wild so much that all his good days were spent outside. His dreams involved a visit to all of Uganda's tourist and heritage sites. He would say, "why should I go out of my beautiful country,

spend a different currency, hire a translator when our own is filled to the brim, every awe striking scenery is right here, in our faces, beckoning us? The world yearns to see the Pearl and we who claim to go out of the country haven't even toured our nearest game reserves," Patrick always retorted.

He didn't get to go but Uganda came to him in form of Murchison falls National park. My sister and I packed out of the clinic he was admitted in, straight to the waiting ambulance ambushed with a crowd of onlookers as we lifted my brother out. Tubes stuck in and to him, strapped to a bed and attached to all those bleeping machines, we set off for home. White medicine had done all it could and now it was time to wait on divine help. But deep within, I knew this was his very last travel and wanted him to feel, hear every single thing. So holding his clammy, cold hand in mine, I began to softly tell him everything we are passing by.

The vast savannah grassland that dominated the roadside, busy towns bustling with hawkers of meat, fruits, chapatis, boiled eggs, you name it! The weather, trees, jokes, and selfies all found their way into my narration. We even ate together though his was through a tube. Nearing northwestern region, the road was in shambles and moving on, would jostle him up and possibly worsen his already delicate condition. So we made a short-cut through Masindi town to Pakwach where Murchison Falls national park lies in between and has a road straight through it to the Pakwach bridge that served mostly tourists and ambulances.

Trust me, that road was probably the highlight of the whole journey. The sun shining bright, not too hot though. Just the right amount of heat and rays filtering through the foliage, baboon families gracing every bend on the road, totally unbothered by the car slowly moving along. I kept telling him about the uncountable birds darting in the forest. Giant indigenous



Buffaloes feeding symbiotically with egrets

trees I'd never seen before swaying in the gentle breeze. As game rangers kept emerging from time to time from within the greenery, dressed in green t-shirts and khaki shorts. One of the them gave us a wave and a salute with his walking cane. As we neared the middle of the park, I believe, I heard a pop and a fizz. Upon my inquiry, the driver informs us that we have a punctured tyre so, we'd have to fix it. After being cramped for 5 hours straight, I could not wait to stretch. Making sure Patrick was comfortable, I climbed out. It's like I emerged in a different realm. All my wild life fantasies stood looking straight at me, eyeball to eyeball. I was livid with excitement. Miles and miles of caramel coloured antelopes stood grazing on both sides of the road. So beautiful! Those slender legs prancing around oblivious or unbothered by the car parked on the roadside undergoing mechanical surgery. My older sister came out of the other side and showed me a giraffe crossing the road at a gentle pace as if it owned the unending trail of grey slab. Probably knowing how unbusy the road is.

The ambulance crew were clicking their phone cameras left and right trying to get the best angle. Just as the giraffe crossed on the other side, I saw buffalos munching grass peacefully as little white birds flew around them. Hartbeests looking muscular, bush bucks in herds. Every single turn I made

had something wild in it, a warthog family covered in bits of mud running in a frenzy. Tiny baby warthogs waddling around their mother trying to keep up as the father edged behind them. Then I saw Kobs, coexisting peacefully besides the antelopes as they all grazed, funny enough, the cat family evaded my eyes. I realized we weren't the only vehicle stranded when a young looking man made his way over to us. He came to find out what had happened to our car. Turns out he is a soldier in the army and they are stationed to protect wildlife against poachers. Given the vast number of antelopes and kobs, the government is right to get armed protection. He showed me a far away shrubbery saying that a pride of lions made it their home but are on a prowl. Scared for his safety, I inquired about his living arrangements. He smiled and pointed to large truck parked near the road behind us. It looked secure but I for one wouldn't be caught dead living in the wild. After a while he left and the driver informed us that the car was all fixed.

We climbed in and immediately I took my brother's hand and began telling him everything that was outside. He rewarded me with a twitch. Suddenly the car slowed and the driver told us to look outside, sliding the windows, I looked out. Sweet Jesus! a family of large elephants bathing in a muddy swamp! oh! I could just squish those

ears on the baby calf being bathed by both parents, wild ducks I presume, gliding across the calm swamp water. More kobs gracing the western skyline. By then we were in the Nile basin near Pakwach. Greyish pink Hippos surfaced snorting a spray of water, others squelching in the muddy side.. Birds of different species and colors chirping and flying in the evening sun. Coming to the Pakwach bridge, we slowed considerably to enjoy the last spectacular view before dusk and night make an appearance. This is so picturesque like a painting; little boats dotting the horizon and dusk line upon gentle rippling waters. Tiny looking fishermen casting their

nets. I heard my brother's sigh like he knew it was goodbye. The very last rendezvous with the most beautiful pearl can offer on her buffet of nature goodies. This journey offered me the most communication I could have with my comatose brother. It became the last bond I could ever create with him. A precious memory I could hold and add more to the stash. Murchison falls national park is the last place my brother grunted, smiled and twitched his body at. And I saw more animal species all in one place than I'd anticipated. Murchison has everything nature addicts would dream of.



Waterbucks in MFNP



Crested Cranes pecking by the Delta sector in Murchison Falls National Park



Enroute Murchison through Budongo

Ewaffe Cultural Village, A Wealth Of Culture!

Ann Agwanga

On September 23rd at 5:45 a.m, my skin danced with goosebumps at the shrill of my alarm. After a week with a beehive of activity, I could feel my heart pound with excitement for the first time. From the word go, I knew the day spelled ecstasy of epic proportions.

Together with other top 20 travel writers, we set off from Uganda Tourism Board offices at 8:30 a.m. for a cultural feisty at Ewaffe Cultural village at Naggalama, Kayunga Road, Mukono.

With each turn, Kampala city's unique charm and allure piqued my interest. The bustling of cars and cyclists, the soothing weather, the flamboyant display of shops, malls, restaurants and schools formed a backdrop to our organic everyday human activities that make life zealous.

On such trips, the reality of personality types becomes more pronounced as some people prefer to read a book while others gaze outside the window, their ears glued to headphones. Still others will die for chitchats about nothing and everything and become the best of friends, hours into the journey.

As we drifted further to the outskirts of Kampala, I indulged in the splendor of the dip and sway of land, the patterns and species of flora. I opened the window and surrendered to the wind whipping my face. At times flashes of sunlight descended on it but I didn't mind, I was engrossed in the turns,

inclines and declines of the road as we drifted from one farm and country house to another. When we finally arrived at the cultural village, it felt like ancient tradition had melted away modern innovation. The papyrus gate, a large hut and a lucrative garden of

medicinal plants enhanced that feeling.

Nothing warms the heart like top notch hospitality, Aisha and her team displayed it effortlessly. A group of young girls and boys performed the kiganda traditional dance. The drums and xylophone brought a relaxing gentle sway of a beautiful melody as women clad in Gomesi (Ssengas') and Mr. Mayanja





At Ewaffe Cultural Village.

Musa the mobilizer dressed in a blue kanzu served us coffee cherries and banana juice in gourds with ceaseless grins and a re-echoed Nsanyuse okulaba (it's good to see you).

As the drums played, I felt the heavy vibration of the beats racing through my skin, leaving me with anticipation of the next sequence. With time, I was dancing.

The wooden logs were quite the seats, they were stable on the ground and kept one in a straight posture. It's where we sat as Mr. Mayanja enthusiastically gave welcome remarks. He chanted, 'Abagenyi Baffe' and we replied: Ewaffe. Each time our attention was required, this statement was shouted out.

One of the most intriguing and educational activities was a tour in the garden for medicinal plants. We have seen these plants before, probably plucked a leaf or two but we barely know their significance in treating some of the scariest of diseases.

Curiosity ate at me each time Justin, our tour guide, spoke about each of the plants. Aloe vera treats malaria; ginger treats throat cancer, c-section wounds and menstrual pain; turmeric treats pressure; lemongrass cleanses the kidney and the gallbladder; kayayana treats skin rashes; cactus treats diabetes 2, hangover and menstrual pain; drinking hibiscus helps in blood addition; rosemary is a great steaming antidote for women; kiwankulata heals ulcers and wounds within the digestive system and okra gives vitamin K, among others. These natural remedies have no side effects and are easily accessible. Don't suffer from disease, visit Ewaffe and get cured.

There is nothing as fun as a free nature walk. As we strode through a small footpath to the well, I got to unplug, observe and explore nature at its best. The sun was shining overhead, casting a warm glow on us, there was a high-pitched squeal of a bird evidently marking its territory and I veered passed over-hanging brambles as I skillfully guarded the water pot on my head.



Aisha Nabwanika, the proprietor of Ewaffe Cultural village, welcoming the travel writers.

Watching another trudge down the well, kneel and draw water with a pot was quite a sight to behold. Grown over the water was a beautiful leafy plant called Nalongo.

With some carried away in conversation and some balancing water pots on their heads, we ambled our way through beautiful homesteads and arrived at the cultural village just in time for a fruit delicacy. At the sight of watermelon, bananas, sugarcane, jackfruit, pineapples and guavas, my intestines danced with joy.

The Buganda culture is amazing. The Ssengas' (Aunties) groom and nurture girls on how to take care of a homestead. We had lessons on preparing matooke, luwombo, basket weaving and mat knotting. The interesting part was how easily the Ssengas' incorporated sex education in each aspect. A woman must trade carefully and slowly while preparing luwombo. Like an intimate scene with her husband, it is not to be rushed. One of the Ssengas' laid out a mat. On it she placed a basket, banana

leaves and the ingredients; groundnuts and chicken which she had richly marinated. She proceeded to wrap a cloth around her waist and knelt.

First, she took the basket, then she put a bare banana leaf on top. She got another; (akawayiirro) which she had passed over fire to ensure that the soup doesn't leak. She then gently poured the marinated chicken in the middle and covered it up with another banana leaf (akawowo), and thereafter slowly assembled all the banana wrappings and tied them in one knot.

When all was set, she poured water into a saucepan, placed some banana stems on top, a bunch of banana leaves and then finally the luwombo, ready to cook.

'And that is how bedroom matters are handled; carefully, neatly, gently, slowly.' She said, her voice as smooth as butter.

The bark cloth fig tree (Mutuba) brought a sensational blend to the already rich history.



Senga demonstrating how to make juice

Juma, our tour guide, spoke about the preparation of bark cloth with eyes dazzling with unmatched passion. The top skin he said is cut out and placed on a wooden stand where it's hit with Ensambo (a wooden log/ mallet) until it is smooth and flat. It is then placed under the sun to dry. Not only does it preserve dead bodies, it's also used during coronation of Kings and dressed on a young man as a mark of heirship. One feel at it and subconsciously for me, I had shaken

hands with the president. I only washed my hands because I could hardly keep my mouth-watering taste buds in check when the luwombo was served. It felt as though I was part of an eating competition on television because suddenly, I was eating under time pressure. If I was happy, with the accompaniments, I was elated. A bite at the steaming matooke, sweet potatoes, cassava, pumpkin, nakati, binyebwa and yams made my stomach tingle. I was in love; in love with food.

Just when I thought I had seen it all, mats were laid out for us in the garden where we had an engaging session with the Ssengas. Amidst high rocketing laughter and heated arguments, they let us in on the roles of men and women in the bedroom. The one hour passed like a lightning flash and Aisha asked each of us to give our briefs on the day. We did, with so much enthusiasm with hospitality and the food standing out most.

When we hear Tourism, most of us are drawn to National Parks, wildlife, water bodies and falls, yet there is more. A cultural experience is an equally beautiful and important part of tourism. To know the intricate details of another culture; how the people live, what they eat, how they dress, what their day-to-day life is and their beliefs is intriguing and fascinating. Ewaffe Cultural village is an embodiment of this. You get to experience beautiful people, culture and exquisite local cuisines all at once. The charge is Ugandan Shillings 60,000 for adults, 30 dollars for foreigners and Uganda shillings 40,000 for children.

Exploring Uganda's Magnificence through Ewaffe Cultural Village

By Martha Uwera

When Winston Churchill defined Uganda as *The Pearl of Africa* in his book titled *My African Journey*, his definition was born not only of the exquisite physical features, and wildlife that constitutes Uganda, but her rich cultural heritage too. Known for its ethnicity and diverse tribes, Uganda is a pot of rich culture. Every region that constitutes this country in the face of East Africa is true testament to this. I was honoured to receive the privilege of being part of a trip to Ewaffe Culture Village. This therapeutic trip gave me a glance at Buganda's culture and a visual representation of why Uganda is called a beautiful pearl.

Ewaffe Cultural Village derives its name Ewaffe from Luganda; loosely translated as "our home." This name mirrors the intended purpose of the centre. The cultural centre is approximately an hour drive from the capital Kampala via Gayaza road. Using this route leads you to Naggalama in Mukono district where this centre of cultural heritage is situated. The journey from Kampala to this place is a soothing road trip away from the boisterous rowdiness of the city. Ewaffe is a hub situated in a serene environment graced by the picturesque scene of nature. It is surrounded by trees that saturate the air with freshness.

Myself and travel companions were welcomed at the centre's entrance by a troupe of dancers. They were a team of young girls adorned with vibrant smiles as they artfully wriggled their waists to the rhythmic tune of the customary traditional Maganda dance. "Abagenyibaffe, tusanyuse nnyo okubalaba. We are happy to receive you, our visitors." The dancers and hosts of the centre ushered us cheerfully into their home. Some of the guests veered onto the dance floor and showed off their dancing skills in unison with the troupe.

As the welcoming troupe entertained us with their thrilling Maganda dance, middle aged women adorned in Gomesi; traditional outfit for females in Buganda passed on gourds of fresh homemade banana juice to quench the thirst that we had from our journey. The juice was rejuvenating and wiped all traces of thirst. Also, we were given smoked coffee seeds neatly wrapped in banana fibres to cement our welcome. After we had settled into the aura of the cultural centre, the CEO of the centre gave us a brief orientation of what we were to expect from the tour.

The farm Tour: This was a journey through the medicinal garden of mother nature. Here, we got to understand that no disease is incurable, provided we know the right remedy for its treatment. Our guide, Justine Nanyonga was amiable, answered most questions, and gave us detailed explanation for each of the herbal medicines that sat in the large stretch of a garden. The guide, gave us both the native Luganda names for the herbs, alongside English translations for the non-Luganda speakers. Here, I learnt about the names of different herbs and their medicinal importance. Like; Aloe vera for skin ailments, Rosemary is an antidote for pain and inflammation, Lemon grass is an antiseptic that can be used for treatment of intestinal disorders, and a remedy for fever. Tour of the Village Well. We took a walk to the village well to learn how water was collected in the traditional African society. We basked in the soothing afternoon sun that dazzled upon our skins and gazed upon nature as we walked to the well. This phase of the trip was a time travel experience to customs that existed in the past. Here, we learnt that the well is called Nnalongo, the Luganda name for mother of twins. Our Guide Justine, explained that the well derives its name from the Buganda belief that as a mother of twins, Nnalongo loves her children and



The medicinal garden



Nanyonga showing Uwera how to draw water from a well

for this, the well never dries so that the inhabitants of the place can have water throughout the year. We took turns learning how to draw water from the well using pots artistically crafted from clay.

Tour of the Village Well. We took a walk to the village well to learn how water was collected in the traditional African society. We basked in the soothing afternoon sun that dazzled upon our skins and gazed upon nature as we walked to the well. This phase of the trip was a time travel experience to customs that existed in the past. Here, we learnt that the well is called Nnalongo, the Luganda name for mother of twins. Our Guide Justine, explained that the well derives its name from the Buganda belief that as a mother of twins, Nnalongo loves her children

and for this, the well never dries so that the inhabitants of the place can have water throughout the year. We took turns learning how to draw water from the well using pots artistically crafted from clay.

We had a concise break after the trip to the well. Our hosts entertained us with a nutritious bounty of fresh fruits. The fruits ranged from jackfruit, pineapples, watermelon, to mention but a few. We sucked on the nutrients of the fruit as we bonded on what we had learnt on the first phase of our tour.

The next phase was **a practical learning classroom.** Ssengas, clad in *Gomesi* gave us lessons on cooking, basket weaving, making banana juice, and mats. My biggest highlight during this session was learning



Some of the guests have a cultural experience of fetching water with clay pots



The commercial break that came with a bounty of nutritious fruits.

the art of preparing *Luwombo*, a traditional *Ganda* food cooked in banana fibres. The amiable *Ssenga* who took us through this session explained the historical significance of this meal in Buganda culture and households. As she tactfully arranged food into banana fibres, she gave us a detailed explanation of the art behind preparation of this meal. This was a session that required jolting notes, and first-class attention, for preparing *Luwombo* is a delicate art.

Lunch came after our hand skills lessons with the *Ssengas*. A sumptuous feast of chicken *luwombo*, pumpkin, cassava, yam, sweet potato, groundnut sauce and *nakati*; green vegetables. Our meal was accompanied by fresh fruit juice. We devoured our food amidst

conversation and the hearty laughter born from an appetite for delicious food.

After the food had settled into our bellies and elated our touristy spirits, my travel companions and I had another learning session. This was a detailed learning experience about bark-cloth made from the *Mutuba tree*; Luganda name for the bark fig tree. We were given an enriching lesson on the significance of bark cloth in African societies and its process of production.

The last phase on the hierarchy of our tour was the ***Ssenga and Kojja session***. This was an empowering sex ed class that answered the dynamics of relationships, marriage, and the intricate world of adulthood. The

Practical lessons at Ewaffe Cultural Village School



Guests partake in lessons from cooking luwombo, making banana juice, and the art of weaving



An educative session about; Barkcloth



The sumptuous unch delicacy of Luwombo complimented by other food



The last phase of the empowering culture tour.

Ssengas, spearheaded this conversation and gave enlightening answers to the spiral of questions from the guests.

Ewaffe Cultural Village is a commendable haven that showcases the rich cultural heritage of Uganda. It is a sanctuary that gives an empowering time travel experience through Buganda's cultural norms and traditions. Also, it is an archive that heralds the uniqueness of the diverse traditions not just in Uganda, but the African continent. For every bibliophile drawn to African Literature,

the cultural centre is a monument that gives a visual representation of the book *Kintu*, by Uganda's prolific author Makumbi. If you want to explore the remarkable culture of Africa's Pearl, and discern the uniqueness of customs across the diverse African continent, *Ewaffe Cultural Village* is the answer.

The journey back home with my travel companions after the trip was a pensive and joyous mood from a group that had undergone a life changing voyage.

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Igongo Cultural Centre:

A Ventricle
of Western
ravishing
History and
Heritage

Martha Uwera Aamani

Biharwe eclipse, Mbarara District - Western Uganda

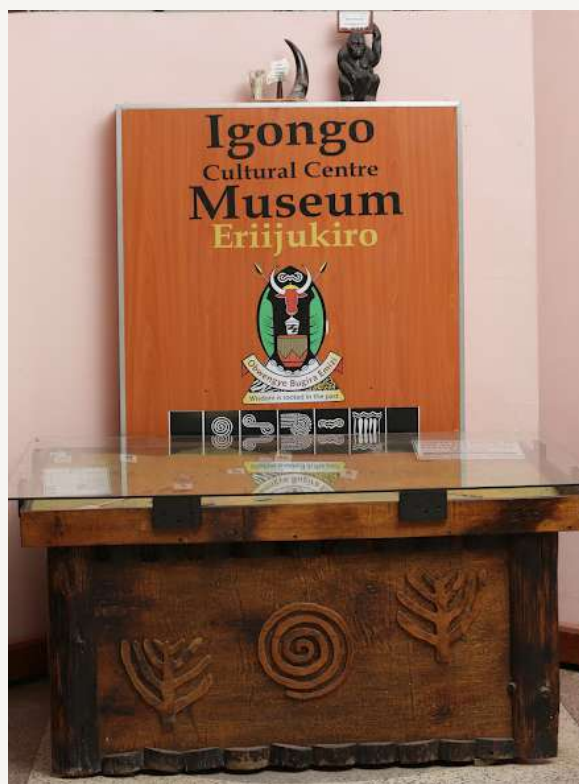


The Igongo Cultural Centre Museum is a gem situated in the arm of South Western Uganda. It sits along the Masaka-Mbarara highway, in Biharwe town. When driving from Kampala, the museum is on the right-hand side of the road, approximately fifteen kilometres from Mbarara city, the biggest town in the area. The journey from Kampala; Uganda's capital to Igongo, was a rhapsodic road trip that gave room to cascade from the city rowdiness, traffic, boisterous activities, to a serene countryside adorned by spectacular hills, valleys, stretches of terrain, and land that carry echoes of Uganda's agricultural history. Watching this splendid scenery unfold like a video in motion, cements the statement that; Uganda is indeed the Pearl of Africa.

The Centre is a ventricle that holds historical artifacts, stories, and cultural heritage. Mainly, it is a home of the history of the Banyankore, and people of Kigezi, who dominantly occupy the South Western part of Uganda.

Understanding the Evolution of Uganda's History and Traditional Customs Uganda wears the Crown labeled; Pearl of Africa, not just for her captivating scenery and wildlife, but diverse cultural heritage. Uganda is blessed with so many tribes and communities that tell a story of difference in cultural customs, traditions, and languages. Igongo is the perfect haven for one to understand how the people of Ankole and Kigezi lived before the existence of the contemporary world. It is also a home for one trying to get in touch with their roots, ancestry heritage, and understanding the history of Uganda.

The Museum has valuable artifacts that tell stories of how people in the past survived. These Artifacts range from Iron ore items, pottery, baskets, mats, and various immaculate works of Art. The items are labeled with their traditional names that herald the rich history of their creators alongside the different purposes they served.



Activities like Pottery; Known as Okunogoora in the Runyankore/ Rukiga language, Iron Working; Okuheesha, Basketry; Okuruka. These activities are accompanied by the different tools that were used in their production. There is a collection of utensils, hunting tools, baskets, and ancient hides. In traditional societies, laziness, unemployment and poverty were shunned. Depicted in their adage; "Otaine nte na rutookye tashwera." Loosely translated as; "No cows, no banana plantation, no wife."

At the museum, I explored the cultural practices and norms that were in existence during pre-colonial Uganda. Traditional practices like Marriage, Worship and Divination, plus the processes that came with preparation of food and drink. I learnt about the modes of education and ways skills were passed on before the schools. For instance, learning how to count was taught through a game called; Nzaara. Young people acquired technical knowledge in skills like weaving, pottery and metal works from their parents and elders. Girls and newlywed brides among the Ankole communities were taught morals under the Euphorbia tree. The Tour Guide shared an anecdote that this tree which resembles the Cactus, was preferred for

education purposes because men would not easily climb it and eavesdrop onto the lessons that were being taught to women. The girls were mainly taught how to manage their homesteads and how to look after their homes.

Threats were mainly used to pass on moral lessons. The most profound memory from the trip to Igongo was learning that girls that got pregnant before marriage were thrown over the Kisiizi falls in Rukungiri.

Igongo Cultural Centre is a mirror for one to understand the transition of Uganda during the ancient versus the civilized situation today. The change is portrayed from the ways of life, fashion styles, to modes of communication and transport, systems of education, recreational activities, and even the evolution of houses.

While at the museum, I was honored to embark on a journey to the medieval times that explained the ways of dressing that were in existence, the ways communication was made, transport means, housing, and the available recreational activities. The pattern in evolution between the past and present, is manifested not only in the way of life and cultural customs; It is also illustrated in the food consumption today and the ways it was preserved and prepared. I learnt that Oburo (Millet) a cherished food among the Banyankore was originally preserved in baskets. Today, factories have modernized packaging into paper bags.



At Igongo, a wall has been dedicated to herald some of the significant changes that have happened in Uganda. I was awed to gaze at the genesis and refurbishing of the Ugandan shilling throughout the shift in Presidential regimes. Also, I was enthralled by the development in the modes of currency from the ancient barter trade that was in existence, cowrie shells, before the advancement to monetary transactions. There is also a section of the walls at the Cultural Centre which commemorates some of the leaders who ruled parts of East Africa. The icons celebrated on this wall stretch from areas beyond Ankole, and Kigezi, to Karagwe, Bunyoro-Kitara, Burundi, and Rwanda.

The hours within the walls of Igongo Cultural Museum are worth a voyage; the journey is a practical exploration away from the knowledge tucked within the depths of history books. For me, the memories, lessons, and time travel done at Igongo bloom like a rejuvenating flower planted in my soul. There is an Art and Crafts shop outside the museum where one can purchase delightful mementos to cement the amazing trip. The shop also has a section that boasts of homemade Uganda Literature, with books

written by Ugandans- telling the stories and customs of Uganda.

In Summary

The Museum was built as a commemorative symbol of the wisdom, creativity, bravery, leadership and cooperation between the people of South-Western Uganda and their neighbors from years past to the present. Its location at Biharwe is significant because of its association with historical events in the region.

During the Bunyoro occupation of Nkore, by King Olimi Rwitamahanga in 1520, in which period the Kingdom lost most of its cattle, and the people experienced great famine, a great battle was fought at Biharwe. Amidst the battle, an eclipse of the sun took place, forcing the invaders into an immediate withdrawal, leaving behind all the cattle. Ntare I Nyabugarobwera was the heroic king at the time. The eclipse of Biharwe is acknowledged internationally and is used to calculate periods in which the different kings of the great lakes region reigned. Biharwe was also the location of the palace of King Rugamba (Ntare III) of Nkore, whose reign is thought to have been from 1587-1615.





The Flowing Waters of Kisoro

By Mercy Twinomujuni

Is that kettle boiling already? Bring it over, pour the steamy water over the gingered tea leaves, and fill the cups to the brim. I smell roasted maize, am I right? Bring it over in heaps, pull your chair closer and lean forward towards me: it's going to be a long story, this one. I am excited to leave behind the Kampala 'madness' and plunge myself in the sweet nature of my motherland.

The journey is supposed to begin at 7:00 am. We are to link up at my home in Kulambyro. 6:30am, I am already up and down setting the table; boiled maize cut into pieces, toasted bread, freshly-roasted chapatis. One flask is full of white porridge, the other has plain water. On the fire is a fresh pot of beef *katogo* simmering quietly, and the millet flour is on standby ready to be turned into bushera.

I breathe in the fresh air of the hill as I marvel at the beauty of my surroundings. From up here I can see the Baha'i temple with its lone spire, and a bit into the distance I can see the 'Next Media Park' with its ever-flying Uganda flag. Further into the horizon rises other hills, covered in a grey foggy mirage. The sun is beginning to come out. The neighbor's rooster crows enthusiastically. A

strong scent of coffee hits me from inside the house. My husband. He always takes coffee, before drinking a cup of bushera. I find it such a weird combination but well, it makes him happy.

By a quarter to 10, everyone is fed and fit to move, or rather unfit given the protruding stomachs. I have a grandmother thing about me, if you're not careful I will feed you until you are not sure what exactly you had come for. I do not quite like roadside snacks, so I marinated and baked enough chicken drumsticks overnight; everyone has a generous amount within reach.

Someone turns on the music. "*Piiiiii Yo leng, Yo leng wan okata akata*," we sing along to this Acholi song excitedly. Off-key and off-beat. We do not know the lyrics, but with the joy in our ride, one could think we knew the song! The video shows people in colorful attire with feathers on their heads, dancing with half-calabashes. The song brings back sweet memories of my visit to Gulu. A strikingly green place, contrary to what I had imagined. I cannot forget the dried beef cooked with groundnut paste which I had enjoyed in the city of northern Uganda.

"*Laba ndigenda n'agula empanvu endababa*," a peculiar voice tears me away from my Acholi land reminiscences. Nandujja's 'Ndabada' is now blaring through the Bluetooth speaker. Suddenly I wish I was standing somewhere, to show off my Maganda dancing skills. It's a waist-rolling affair, this dance. Most Ugandan dances actually involve a fair share of waist rolling and twisting. A thought crosses my mind of how interesting it would be if this was one of the requirements for one to prove they are Ugandan. At the passport office; *sooka onyeenyemu tulabe Ssebo. Nedda Ssebo toli wawano gwe!*

I tried singing along to the song and everyone bursts out laughing. I have a husky voice, it does not match the ggoni I am trying to sing, apparently. Also that I'm singing in an 'English' accent. Who sings Nandujja in a 'fancy' accent? Also, I am not pronouncing the 'p' in 'empanvu' because in my language such Ps are silent. "*Laba ndigenda n'agula emanvu endabada*" – this is what I'm singing, sending everyone in a new wave of uncontrolled laughter. For a moment we go silent and listen to the message in the song; not only is it hilarious, but also educative and a good representation of the cultural values that the Baganda people hold dear; decency, respect, sexual perfection nuanced and hidden in attenuated phrases and food references.

One song after the other come and go, each one with its own share of memories. As Master Kalenzi's "*Obunyamahunde*" comes on, my eyes wander out the window to a view that leaves me breathless. It has been hours and hours of road, everyone is exhausted. In

the distance, round green hills stick together in a beautiful cleavage, spreading apart as we approach them. Sporadic trees spread their leaves out like parasols. Long-horned cows graze peacefully on the grass. We have entered Ankole territory. I am partly from Ankole.

Soon we approach Kabale. I am a few breaths away from the land of my ancestors. We stop over at Bunyonyi to awe and admire the lake. Tens of islands stand out majestically from the pacific water. Lake Victoria might be our biggest lake, but this one is our most beautiful.

We spend the night at Makanga Hill in Kabale district. The wind is cold and bitter; the bed warm and sweet. There are night roses right under our window, so their scent wafts into our room and envelopes us like a blanket. My husband and I are the only couple, the friends we had gone with are all single. I feel sorry for them, probably in their rooms hugging pillows miserably. The chirping birds wake us at dawn. From the balcony, mother nature spreads out in all her green glory. The golden sun hides behind the hills like a shy virgin on her first night, its rays peeping out one by one. Wild roses and bushes array themselves sweetly.

Three hours later, we are in the meandering road heading to Kisoro. The corners are sharp and many. High up in the mountains, I gazed beneath, from where we were traveling from, and ahead where the road was leading. The sheer beauty of the scene will make you, just like me, fall in love. God must have been in a good mood when he created this piece of place.



As we advance, the sound of my language, the sight of my people, warms my heart. Kisoro is a land of love, of laughter, of abundant food. The Bafumbira are a very kind and welcoming people. Mt. Muhabura gazes down at us like the guide it is. Mt. Sabinyo smiles because it knows we are headed towards it. My husband and I have climbed it twice, we are back for the third time.

My Kisoro, generous as she is, offers more than the volcanoes; the lakes in her are a wonder. They sit quietly like a treasured princess, waiting to be discovered by a charming traveler. Lake Mutanda, my favorite, Lake Mulehe, Lake Chahafi, Lake Kayumba. Behind them is a background of terraced hills, and an enormous collection of several bird species. The breeze is sweet, a perfect place to create picturesque memories. Several rivers flow through this land, giving life to the plants and trees, nourishing the wildlife. The rain does not like to miss the party, it visits regularly, sending soft adorable scents up our nostrils as it mixes with the rich volcanic soils. It's a well-watered place this one, because Uganda is a country of endless waters, in every sense of the word. In Rufumbira we would sum all this in two words: 'Iwacu Heza.'



Summiting Fort Portal's Kyeganywa Hill;

Patience Natukunda



Conquering the Craters Beneath

The scenic features along the slope -- rare species of wild scented flowers blooming in between rock cracks, a hundred various kinds of shrub and herb, the cool breeze that approaches the higher one goes and the freedom that comes with the elevation -- scaling the heights of Fort Portal's Kyeganywa Hill is nothing short of exhilarating.

Mountain climbing was never really an adventure I fancied having spent the better part of my childhood in Ntungamo, a landscape generously endowed with undulating hills.

My admiration for these fine features; a haven for cattle grazing which is a common activity for many folks there, was better kept than exploited.

Little did I know, however, that the hills of Fort Portal, relatively steeper than those

in Ntungamo, would be the most freeing heights I would dare to ascend; explore the beauty and fascinating calm they exude. Upbeat with the Easter break bliss, my well rested muscles were up for a climb on a rather gloomy Monday; the 1,588-metre Kyeganywa Hill was calling, a few Kilometers from the center of Uganda's tourism city.

Accompanied by a friend who is a local of the proverbial (and literal) clean city, we, alongside other visibly curious tourists, launched the hike on the hill that towers over 3 magnificent crater lakes; Lake Saaka, Lake Kyegere and Lake Nyabikora.

The lakes lay in utmost tranquility save for a few drifting leaves that hit the dismal current, a good metres' descent from the decades-old, tall trees that monopolize the shores.



At the foothill, the lush green that stretches from horizon to horizon captivates your soul into the idea of getting a step forward on the hill, after all, 'the view must be even better from the top.'

Minutes into the hike, assuredly, the height comes with a sense of achievement and ultimately, a stronger yearning for what the other side has to offer – Lake Saaka that can only be fully viewed from the top.

The desire to keep climbing gets more intense by the minute despite the fire that starts to burn in the thigh muscles – it's that moment when hikers question their choice of shoes and condemn their pride for turning down the trekking pole.

While some started to clutch on the sturdy bunchgrass species that line the uphill pathway, others were up to the task; a sip of water, hands lunched on the pelvic bones, eyes on the prize – the far-off top. Giving up wasn't something they came for but rather summitting.

Half way the climb, the conversations were getting boring, the calories seemed to be breaking the shackles; fleeing my body, leaving me lighter but burning with thirst, despite the cool, hazy afternoon it was. I had never seen people daring their will power, striving harder for a non-existent prize than they did 30 minutes in.

A few slowed down midway to take in the refreshing breeze and wallow in the comfort the layered spongy grass offered, others vlogged the moments away, bragging about their half summit to their colleagues who ditched the hike for horse riding at the foothill facility while



the adventurous ones asked questions about the Mountains of the Moon University, Nyakasura School and Omukama's Palace, all faintly visible from the hill.

Slowly but surely, keeping one foot in front of the other amidst heavy sighs and ragged breathing, the hikers in my cohort and I were peeking at the table top, a few minutes longer and we would sooner join the early birds who were drinking the excitement and exhaustion away, dancing their aching muscles back to life.

About 48 minutes into the climb, I set foot on the cement sort of tower marked with a bold X, spun around to enjoy the 360 view of the crater lakes that surround the hill, oozing nothing but splendor and soothing magic with every sweep from the white feathered birds that seemed to enjoy the moment much as we did.

The wavy reflections of the surrounding trees in the waters were a perfect addition to the cocktail of the breathtaking sights that were mine, all mine to savour.

I had never felt so rich, rich because I had the most spectacular, dreamy view right there; left, right, back and front, deuces up, fresh air in my lungs as Sheebah's 'Nkwatako' blasted from a Bluetooth speaker hoisted by this elated fully built, broad shouldered guy, wielding a large Baileys bottle in the other hand.

The only bit I missed from the memo was carrying a whiskey flask to celebrate the summit, but that could wait, I had a lot more to get high on; the grey sky littered with

broken clouds, the heartbreakingly beautiful landscape, the white still waters only a stone's throw away from where my feet rested, the free spirited people 'getting jiggy with it' and a good friend who held my hand through these many spasms of euphoria.

Fort Portal is truly blessed with nature's phenomenal features, the ever-so-gentle and soft-spoken people are only but an icing on the cake. My day's adventures on the hill were a testament to how much there is to enjoy when you make a choice to step out of your usual (and most probably draining) routine.

With no limit to how long we could stay at the flat peak, we lounged the evening away; sitting, laying face up, holding hands, watching the sky change to darker shades of grey. It was our world – we conquered the craters and all else beneath (yes, for a couple of hours).

The downhill trek was a walk over for those who had their equilibrium in check, a little eventful for those with wobbly knees. I would 100% recommend hiking the Kyeganywa Hill and its surrounding crater lakes in Kalyango – Fort Portal, for your own memories to make and story to tell.





Listen.

Hush and be still. And listen. Listen to the winds. The winds carry the legends of our land. Listen intently to, King Isaaza howling and mourning beneath the darkness of the underground. Trying to claw his way back to his beautiful kingdom. He is desperate. The tremors get stronger as his desperation grows. He longs for a serving of hot millet washed down with creamy cool milk, from the magnificent Bihogo, the most magnificent cow that ever lived.

Listen. The wind carries a tune. A soft hum from a woman walking to the well. She walks with the grace of a *bakisimba* dancer. *Nambi!* Her youthfulness augments her beauty. Flawless, regal and mesmerizing. It is a beautiful day, the sun is glowing and birds are singing. Only if she knew who was lurking behind the *muwule* tree. Her children wail and are terrified of him, to this day.

Listen. Quiet please. It is a sizzle. And it is building like a crescendo. The anticipation wells up in the mouth and overflows like the Sipi River. A few more processes but the wait seems like an eternity. Similar to the forty years wait for Uganda to get another gold medal at the Olympics. It is a wait that is well worth it. Handcrafted to perfection, using the finest materials. The *Ugandan rolex* is unmatched globally, the only thing that comes in at a close second is, the Swiss Rolex.

Listen! Listen to the flat, rapid and hollow sound of the *engalabi*. The *engalabi* was borne to rule all drums. The *engalabi* beautifully responds the drummer's aggression, releasing a sharp sound from its hollow frame. The beat is frenzied. A mark of festivities. It is *Ekigwo Gumbya*. The wrestlers are in the center of the crowd. Heaving and

puffing. The pride of their clans is on the line. They embody their respective clans. One is from the *Mamba* clan, slippery and flexible. The other from the *Ngo* clan, he may not have much skill, but "a cat can never land on its back." The crowd is rallying their fighter on. The cheering gets more boisterous as more ngule flows. Brewed for celebrations, forge friendships and quell disputes.

Listen! Listen to the voice of God. A thunderous roar of rushing waters and peals of thunder. "Come. Come and see Murchison Falls!" the voice thunders. The roar is deafening. You can hear the water violently crushing against the rocks, frantically squeezing through gorges and then dropping an ungodly height. But strangely enough, the violence has a soothing effect. A tranquility in the chaos.

Listen! Listen to the rhythm and sounds. Ragga, ragga, kadogo kamu, hip hop, RnB, rap, amapiano. It is the sound of music. It is celebration of life. Prolonged laughter from the crowd. Feet shuffling to the beat and bodies swaying to the ballads. It is the Nyege Nyege Festival. This is the convergence of music, cultures and people. In comes the break dancers, ndombolo specialists, shaku shaku experts and uncoordinated folk whose style is to dance intentionally out of tune with the beat. All are welcome. It is a large party and it is not going to end itself.

Listen! Listen to the coffee farmers in the Elgon, home to double world record holder, Joshua Cheptegei. Humming a tune as they pluck ripe coffee berries. Thereafter, like a strict school system, carefully sort out only the berries that meet the high pass mark. The high-quality beans laid out in the tropical sun to dry. Threshed and packed. The creaking of the weighing scale as the bags are measured and loaded onto trucks. The loaders are in a jovial mood, clapping and high fiving. The trucks cough to life, and make a bee line for the processing centers. Beans enter the factory, travel through the machines and leave as the number one coffee roast in the world. A perfect coffee to keep you company as you soak in the sounds of Uganda.

Listen! Listen to the Nile River. As it snakes its way from the great Lake Nalubaale, covers 130km and then exits Uganda. The Nile carries life and excitement as it goes. Home to delicious fish as well as adrenaline inducing rapids. The Nile is special to Ugandans.

Listen! Listen to the hiss as a bottle of Nile Special is popped open. The hiss represents a quality locally brewed beer made by Ugandans. Nile Special has aided celebrations of, Independence Day, two world records, four Olympic gold medals, two pope visits, numerous births and much more.

Listen! Listen, to the Muezzin recite the Adhan at the Old Kampala Mosque. The blaring organ at Namirembe Cathedral. The bell toll from Rubaga Cathedral. Listen to the shuffling of feet, of thousands of pilgrims make their way to Uganda Martyrs Shrine Namugongo. The pilgrims come from faraway lands, buoyed by their faith, the celebrate the life of individuals who died because of an unwavering commitment to their faith. Listen to the great and final silence. There is a presence but it is eerily quiet. Four great Kabakas reside here eternally. The Kasubi Tombs. A final home for those that once ruled a great Kingdom.

Uganda is *katogo*. Katogo is delicious delicacy usually served at breakfast. Traditionally made up of a combination of matooke and beef or offals or mushrooms or beans or groundnuts. The combinations for *katogo* are as many as the humans on this earth. Katogo warms the heart. Katogo can be had for breakfast, lunch, supper or on a first date. Katogo has been known to have some medicinal properties, that is if you consider a hangover as an illness. Most importantly, a finite menu for *katogo* does not exist. Anything goes. Traditionally, matooke/cassava acts as a base thereafter, you are entitled to creative freedom to your palate's desires. On top of the traditional combinations, you can add mushrooms, French beans, tomatoes, eggplants, spices and much more.

If you think you cannot trust my hearing, come and see Uganda, for yourself.



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MARRIOTT
BONVOY

An adventure in the Wild Wild West

By Coutinho. K. Gloria



Ever spent a night in the wild? Forget your scouting and girl guiding days back in primary school. Imagine sleeping in a tented structure right in the middle of the actual game park! I've always been a sucker for road trips and the great outdoors, so when our favourite Kojja, uncle Pat decided to take us on an all-expense paid family trip to a "surprise destination," I wasn't about to be left behind! However, this was no ordinary camping trip. Yes, the tents may have been slightly elevated from the ground and partially reinforced with wooden doors and exterior but it's the thought of a single layer of tent canvas being what separates you from a clan of vicious laughing hyenas outside, that is bound to send instant shivers down your spine! The adrenaline rush from being helpless while in close vicinity with these creatures, just doesn't leave you the same!

Tucked away from the hustle and bustle of the city centre, **Kasenyei Safari camp** is a little haven located somewhere north within Queen Elizabeth National Park in Western Uganda. After branching off the Mbarara-Kasese tarmac highway, brace yourself for the long bumpy anxiety-building dirt road leading to the final stop which is located within a small village, Kasenyei. Along the way you may be fortunate enough to encounter the graceful Uganda kobs in large herds. This is definitely one of the most beautiful sights to behold during the game drive, from their delicate beige skin colour disappearing into the lush green savannah, right down to their somewhat intimidating stare back at you. Well, the first thing we noticed on arrival was that there were neither fences nor any form of enclosing structure! The camp was made up of eight independent significantly spaced grass-thatched tents, each fashioned out of



canvas and reinforced with wooden panels. The main structure which also serves as a reception and dining area is quite open with a large spacious wooden balcony directly overlooking **Bunyampaka crater Salt Lake** downhill, the second most beautiful sight we encountered on this day. For a slight moment, sitting at this balcony breathing in real fresh air while experiencing the sun setting over the horizon made my siblings and I forget about returning to town for sure. This was just the beginning though.

On being ushered into the family tent, we were pleasantly surprised with not only the spacious sleeping area but also the state-of-the-art bathroom space complete with fancy glass-bowl sinks, aesthetically woven laundry baskets, customized kikoyi bathroom robes and to top it all up, legit hot water showers!! At this point, I was convinced that this was the true definition of luxurious living in the middle of the wilderness. The second surprise came at dinner time. It turns out the menu is pre-arranged with the specific

food served according to the chef's special selection. Today it could be beef steak, tomorrow it could be goat ribs while the next day it could be chicken roast. This was conveniently accompanied with an equally scrumptious vegan option to facilitate those that didn't eat meat. This kind of unique arrangement soon got us anticipating our next meal every time.

The third and most thrilling surprise of the day came later in the evening. After a laughter-filled candle-lit four course meal on the deck, what could possibly go wrong? Well, the time soon came for us to trek back to our tent. One of the rules being, never to venture out without an escort. We were to be accompanied in a single file by two torch-bearing security guards, one at the front and the other at the back of the line lest one "Mufasa," attempted to make us their next meal.

A quick flash across the nearby bushes revealed obstacles that we didn't expect to encounter on day one. The sight of about seven larger-than-life creatures grazing along our supposed path to the tent immediately sent my heart racing as I came to the realization that we were actually in the wild. "Hippos!" one of the excited waitresses exclaimed, as if trying to mean it's our lucky day. "The animals always avoid human beings and only attack when they feel threatened," we were reliably informed by one of the security guards. We had to approach our tent from the rare lower end while trying as much as possible not to make any loud noise to attract the animals. Believe me or not, this was probably one of the most exciting but also one of the scariest things I've encountered in my life so far! However, I must say I gained a new found sense of respect for these creatures. This is without saying that my survival instincts were unapologetically awakened for the rest of the trip.

Day two was characterized by more exciting game drives where we got to encounter buffalos, waterbucks, hyenas, warthog, leopards and the highlight being lion-tracing where we got to see the famous tree climbing lions in their natural habitat. Birdwatching was another favourite, as we probably saw at least 100 of the estimated 600 avian species in just three days. The

Kazinga channel boat ride experience was equally a stunner. I have never seen so many elephants in such close proximity! What's even more fascinating is that there are fishing communities that live somewhere along the shores of the Kazinga and they literally co-exist with these beasts on a daily! We witnessed elephants walking freely around the community settlement area, while people went about their normal business. Meanwhile, all these activities were conveniently packaged in the camping experience fee that uncle Pat paid all at once.

The last night at the camp was nothing short of something magical. We wine and dined beneath a star-filled sky as **Mr. Phillip Kiboneka** the managing director who also doubled as our amazing tour guide narrated intriguing stories of past encounters and escapades with the wildlife. Uncle Pat you're the coolest uncle to ever walk this planet, we surely don't deserve you. And lastly, Mr. Phillip the brain behind Kasenyi, you are definitely putting Uganda on the map without a doubt!





The Lullabies of Rushaga

Bint Kasedde

Many places are worth a visit, but only one of them is called Uganda. In Uganda, many places are worth an excursion, but only a few are to die for. I've been to several national parks, seen so many animals. I've even been to the great Murchison Falls. But just when I thought I'd seen it all, I went to a forest that's like no other. This forest holds the world's largest number of gorillas. This is the eminent Bwindi Impenetrable Forest. Nothing will ever beat this. If you don't believe me, come with me.

First of all, I have always wondered why it is called the "impenetrable" forest of Bwindi. Mankind has penetrated it for so long, which is why there is a plethora of luxurious Safari Lodges nestled on the out skirts, and some of them tucked away quite deep in to this dense jungle. The indigenous people of this jungle, the Batwa, are a marginalized community that has been disenfranchised for centuries. I don't know exactly who is to blame, but it seems to me that, it is their culture that has proven "impenetrable" overtime. Away from that, Bwindi Forest is a awe-inspiring jungle, so dense with trees that it looks impregnable at first sight.

Speaking of sights, it evokes love at first sight, the kind that grips you

So tight, especially at night. Everything about it was built to amaze, everything: from there ants building delicate road blocks across narrow paths, to the majestic silver backs standing tall, everything there fascinates with intricate detail. Even the cold warms your heart, as you shiver and quiver with adventurous thrill, laced with a smidge no fear. This place is so lush, it's almost so annoying. I can't help but wonder how so much beauty could have been so neatly placed in just one place. It's almost unfair. My experience kept getting better by the hour, hitting an orgasmic climax at the sight of some two colossal gorillas, one of them a silver back. The other looked younger, with no silvery sheen on its back. It was male, evidently, and was called by some name, apparently named by some tourist. I'd seen a picture of the tourist, clad in Khaki shorts.

This gorilla stood up, facing the silver back, and guess what happened next: Nothing. Just when we expected an epics how down, the creatures just went about their business,



chewing on many a branch for brunch. It's almost like they planned to disappoint. A few more hours into the jungle, and the clouds gathered. A light drizzle sent us straight to our lodges, located in a place called Rushaga. It was 4pm, and I was exhausted. When we got there, I was treated to a warm shower, and after a hearty meal, I took along nap. About three hours later, I awoke to the sound of soft music, and the sight of candle-lit corridors scented with cinnamon. It was twilight, and the sun was fed up, leaving us with an afterglow of red golden hues, spread across the vast sky. The cold was setting in. It wasn't your usual type of chill. It was the type that took to your bone and marrow. I could hardly feel my skin. This frigidity brought us all together a tab on fire. Then came the sharing of our favorite experiences with nature. Then came my turn to speak.

My most cherished moment had come the day before, when we'd just arrived at Rushaga. I saw a bird, and I'm sure the birds aw me too. I think scared it a little, because it flew away. And when it did, it looked like a flying rainbow. I had never seen such a bird before, and I haven't seen it since. It was that type of bird that glowed more radiant than the flowers on which it fed. It was such a spectacle to behold. I wish I had a camera to take it all in. Never travel without a camera! Now all I have is a memory I can only share with words, a sight I can only share with myself. I wasn't starving perse, but the aroma that filled the room

was so inviting. Dinner was served. I can't recall the exotic names of those delicacies, because, after all, they were meant for my in satiable belly, not mind. Besides, it's the mystery that adds to their appeal, because, on such a trip, who wants to eat what they know? What I've failed to fathom is why the tea that's grown here is called "British" tea and why some other kind, still grown here, is called "African" tea. I mean, what else would it be, having been cultivated in the soils of our continent? But who wants to know the rigorous details of colonialism over a cooling cup of tea, served in amounts that be fit holy communion? Besides, after a few glasses of fine wine, I headed straight for bed, stashing my whole self between the sheets.

Just before I drifted off, a rushing gust of wind forced its way across the room, covering me with goose bumps. Straightening my feet and toes with a tingling sensation, I pulled my knees close to my chest, a posture I held for about a minute, reminiscent of our first nine months of the warmth relished in mother nature's womb. I could hear the sound of trees and their canopies swaying in the wind with a drunken flare. Dry twigs of woods were falling on to the roof, and then came the gigantic thud of thunder, the type that makes you repent. Then poured the long-awaited rains. At long last, with eyes closed, my ears fed. What lullabies! Such sweet lullabies!

The lullabies of Rushaga.

Entebbe Airport Modified

Entebbe International Airport's modified terminal building was opened to the public in January 2024 and is ably facilitating smooth operations. Later this year, a new 20,000 square meters terminal building connecting to the current terminal will be commissioned, and that will enhance terminal capacity to at least 3.5 million passengers per year. The upgrades are part of the implementation of a 20-year National Aviation Master Plan aimed at meeting the growing traffic to enhance the passenger experience.



I promised to do Sipi Falls justice.

The glow from the *Coal* drew my attention from Jennifer Makumbi's *The First Woman*. Sparks ignited familiar memories. I smiled. Pondered. Then suddenly felt nostalgia for Sipi. Sipi Falls.

June 03rd, 2022 fell on a Friday. It was tempting to utilize the long weekend for the much needed nap. However, my love for adventure lured me to check out the Eastern side of Uganda.

"Sipi! Here I come." I announced as I threw my arms towards the sky.

As cities faded into countryside, we reached the foot of Mount Elgon. The roar of overwhelmed engines filled the air. Fresh air choked on fumes from burning diesel. The truck ahead hardly climbed.

In our Van, the track by b2c boomed, "Gwe wekka, anzijudde mu mutwe. Mu kifuba, mu mutima, mu magumba." The blast from the music and mimicry competed with the engine. The raucous competition continued. Halfway the hill, Muko – our driver – decided to overtake the struggling truck. The hill was steep. Muko pressed the full length of the pedal. We caught up with the truck. "Jambo" Muko shouted.

The truck driver smiled at Muko. He slowed down. Leaned on the left before he signaled for us to pass. Muko overtook. The hill grew steeper. The engine roared. Agonised. Then suddenly stopped! Muko writhed as he swayed the Van off the road.

The truck driver caught up with us. He peered and giggled. When the hill leveled, he sped off. Muko underestimated the terrain. We watched the truck disappear into the valley. We disembarked and walked straight to taking pictures. We stood. Jumped. Sat on the road. Dashing off at the sound of fast approaching vehicles.



We strolled back and forth. Admired nature. Across the road, the rocky hills rose above one another. The furthest, higher than the nearest. Homesteads scattered at the foothills. On the other side, a grassthatched hut with a mad-wall-finishing was obscured by banana plants. The reed frame popped at one edge. The Van engine had heated up. Muko and the *Help* sprang about. Added water. No sign of recovery.

Dusk was fast approaching. We decided to continue on Boda-Boda. The thought was thrilling. Sipi Falls was calling. The weather was tepid. The Boda-Boda was so slow, enabling an in-depth view of the scenery. The incline was steep. The breeze smelled fresh. The tarmac clean. As we wound through the hills, Sipi Falls started to shyly peep through the moving hills. The Falls were a silver band against a greenish-brown background, which connected the clouds above and the rocky hills beneath.



The tarmac snaked its way through the hills. It formed a sharp curve, then went into a switch back between hills. Another sharp curve. Then came back.

Sipi Falls welcomed us with a cool breeze. Tongues of sunlight permeated Sipi's forest just to lick at our foreheads. Closer, Sipi Falls were magnificent. They dropped easily from the giant rock many metres above into the rocky ground below. They gushed and roared as if forced out of their source. Then snaked through the thickets knowingly as if thirsty to reach their destination.



"Wow." I whispered. Drew in its breeze. Then rushed to take pictures. Under the falls. In the cave. I just couldn't get enough.

Sipi Falls welcomed us with a cool breeze. Tongues of sunlight permeated Sipi's forest just to lick at our foreheads. Closer, Sipi Falls were magnificent. They dropped easily from the giant rock many metres above into the rocky ground below. They gushed and roared as if forced out of their source. Then snaked through the thickets knowingly as if thirsty to reach their destination.



"This is just the first level," the tour guide announced smiling at my satisfaction. The thought of hiking higher was as exhausting as it was exciting. I hiked anyway. The ascent was steeper. The ladders makeshift. Scanty vegetation covered the rocks.



Amidst pauses and long breathes that interrupted hiking; we were prized with the next level. The real Sipi Falls, if you asked me.

Unlike the first level, these Falls poured underground into a 'pocket' – a basin extending into a cave. Huge rocks guarded the pocket. Leaving the opening above for the falls to pour and slits in-between for tourists to maneuver into the pocket. The rocks were covered with slimy patches. Some with lichen. They were ice cold. My bare-feet felt numb.

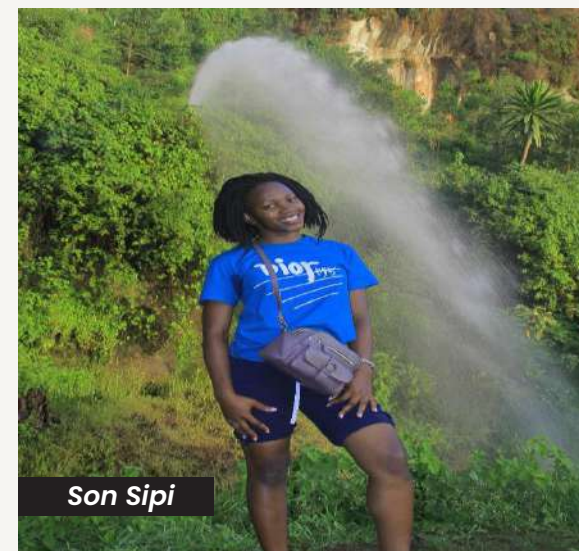


Up, on the giant rock, a naughty male waterfall diverged from its mother. The urge so intense. He confidently projected his discharge into the shrub towards the road. His stream perpendicular to mother stream. He was clad in a magnificent tot rainbow. Mother Sipi, on the other hand, vigorously squirted downhill into the pocket. The pocket was clogged with mist. It was half dark. The mist glittered from partial sunlight.



I descended the rocks, into the pocket. The lower I went, the cooler it became. "Is it the

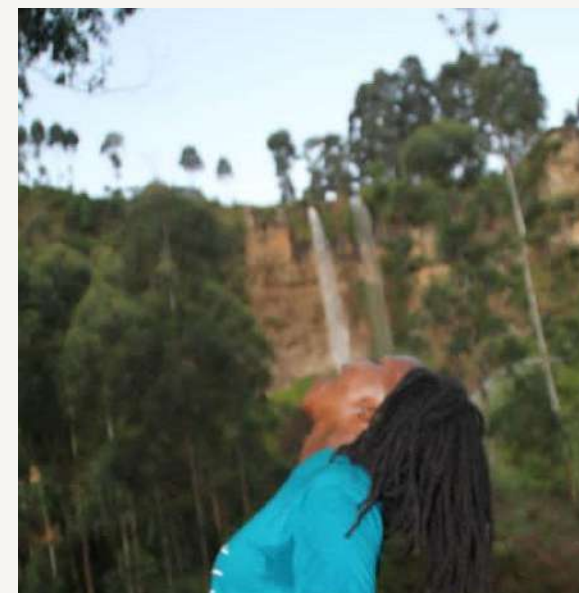
lower or the higher you go?!" I debated the adage until I felt confused.



Son Sipi

The pocket equated to a fridge. The water was icy. I suddenly felt chilly. Voices, in the pocket, were like echoes in the jungle. I sucked in the sights. A frigid prickle nudged at my lungs. Warm mist rushed out when I exhaled.

Back on the road, resident teenagers directed tourists to posture with Sipi for pictures. Tourists postured to drink with their mouth from 'son' Sipi. Others carried on their head their cupped palms as 'mother' Sipi poured in. I joined in. Put my right leg forward. The left, slightly behind. Bent somewhat backwards. Faced up. Mouth opened rather wide. 'Mother' Sipi poured in and a snapshot was taken.



I bought pieces of Coal mined from Mount Elgon. Souvenir. It was sunset when we left for Jinja.



'Coal' Pieces

I pondered on. Oblivious of the glowing Coal. The radiance birthed imaginations of the third level that time didn't allow us to explore. My mind lingered between the fertility of my Sipi experience and what I researched prior to the trip. Compared. Contrasted. Compared. I chuckled at the innocent shallowness of my 'pre-trip' findings. Right there, it dawned on me. No words can describe nature's magnificence! You've just got to experience it. Yet I, subconsciously, promised to do Sipi Falls justice.

I flipped a page of *The First Woman*.

By Regina Ndagire

RELIENCE IN ACHOLI

Fort Patiko – my 100% recommendable destination in Uganda – One of the roundabouts in Gulu City

By Lydia Labanya

After the silenced notorious Lord's Resistance Army's (LRA) guns of war, it has never been this trickled pink for me to travel to Gulu City. So much is changing since the songbird Okot p Bitek chronicled Song of Lawino anthology.

The ebony black pretty girls found at BJz pub, Smiling Panda and Buganda Pub Bar are more scared of losing their mobile phones than their virginity. Mixed-race couples and light-skinned children are a common occurrence after NGOs stormed the area. Come nightfall and nightlife revellers descend on dance floors to energetically mix dance strokes. Thursdays is Culture night. DJ pick music that lures patrons to break into dance. There is Larakaraka (courtship dance,) Reggae and Soukous. Legs are shuffled like a pair of scissors in

motion. This is punctuated with the fast snapping of the chest forward as the back is curved into a C. Sweat beads mat faces as the live chorus of a song climaxes with drums, shakers, leg bells, vocals and guitars competing for audibility.

"Amari" (I love you) is heard as a gentleman ushers his dance partner back to her seat. "Wan ke ken" (We are family) she responds. Elevated to city status, business is booming and Gulu University is changing the profile of its residents. As a result, Acholi is struggling for survival against English, Kiswahili and Luganda. The culturally conservative hotels serve kwon kal (millet bread) and smoked beef in ground paste in generous portions. Odii (sesame paste) is preferred to butter and jam.



The five hours' journey to Gulu (which translates to Heaven in Luganda) has a thrill starter at Ziwa Rhino Camp in Nakaseke. These beasts are also determined to have their DNA survive as they are reproducing as if they have a deadline to beat. Here birds, antelopes and reptiles come as a bonus. Then comes another fascination at River Kafu River junction where roasted cassava is softer than a hot loaf of bread. It is milk white to the eye and tender to the touch. This is besides being yummy to the tongue. It is washed down the throat with a piece of roasted beef, liver or a variety of drinks.

Fort Patiko

Folklore and written history have it that, for Gulu to get where it is, has not been as easy as singing the alphabet. The evidence was revealed by a guide during my tour of Fort Patiko.

"Our woes began with the Arab slave traders who enticed local leaders with guns, cloth and beads in exchange for slaves," narrated the caretaker Ronald Okello. "They wanted our energetic men and pretty women. Among the thousands of men traded, there

was only one man who escaped from the high walls."

Initially, this was constructed by the Arab slave traders as a collection centre. Later Sir Samuel Baker took over its procession from 1872 to 1888 on a mission commissioned by the Queen of England to halt it. One concerned Rwot gathered some young boys and girls and hid them in nearby Guru Guru caves. It was this noun that the foreigners corrupted to present-day Gulu.

"He was scared the slave trade was bound to render his tribesmen extinct," narrated Okello. "Thank God Sir Samuel Baker came along and begun the concerted struggle to halt slave trade."

A walk around the fort was a revelation of wide and deep tunnels running around the perimeter. The tunnels, dogs and armed guards made it hard for anyone to survive. The stone cages in which the captives were kept are still in place minus roofs.

Fort Patiko is ideal for a picnic, wedding reception and school trip. It is a window into the past and how human nature has ably persevered. Here the Acholi culture got



My 100% Recommendable Destination In Uganda

Get ready . Brace yourself . JUMPPP!



As though on cue, my adrenaline levels spiked drastically as I took the last step off the board and straight into plain air. I let out a blood curling scream as gravity took over and the ground rushed up to meet me. For the thrill and the lessons, I would definitely relive this experience in a heartbeat.

Wait – you are probably wondering how I got here. Well, I visited Gulu and so should you. Here is why you, dear reader, should take my endorsement to make Gulu one of your destinations in Uganda. For starters, there is a plethora of sites you can enjoy that can fit whatever type of aesthetic you may enjoy.

As an outdoors person such as myself, I had my fill of activities with 100% satisfaction with each one. Located in northern Uganda, Gulu is home to an obstacle course called the Recreation Project. The Recreation Project is located some ways from Gulu town but is worth the distance. It houses zip-lining, a makeshift rock climbing wall, a “minefield”, a web activity– the last two which can be used as team building activities.

These activities test you in various ways– your physical durability as you scale the rock climbing wall and your mental capacity as you figure out how to get past the web activity. The web activity in question is a series of ropes intertwined in varying shapes. The goal is, as a group, for each group member to get through the web without repeating any of the shapes twice. It challenged our group both mentally and physically. Another activity is the “minefield”. In this activity, between three people, one becomes the “eyes”, another “ears” and the last the “mouth”. The eyes faces a field littered with obstacles, the “ears” is blindfolded and must get through the field



mixed with the Arab and British ones.

The good (slaves) were a key trading item for the Arabs. They were captured from northern Uganda, Gondokoro in Sudan and other neighboring areas. This Ocecu Hill was a sorting ground for slaves.

Healthy-looking ones had to trek from Patiko,

through Sudan across the Red Sea and sold in Egypt.

Today Fort Patiko is a museum exhibiting the slavery industrial area built using stones and concrete. They reveal what would be termed as indescribable scenic beauty. They include The Court Yard, Storage and The Prosecution Chambers.

Location

Tucked 32 kilometres north of Gulu Town, the fort is enclosed by a 16 feet wide and 15 feet deep trench dug by slaves. The site of 9.4 hectares was an Internally Displaced People (IDP) camp at the peak of the LRA war.

In its neighborhood are six other hills comprising: Ajulu, Ladwong, Akara, Abaka and Labworomor in the north and Kiju hill to the south. Located 2 kilometres away from Ocecu hill is one of the stone outcrops with

a cave where one Rwot (chief) Kikayakware used to hide children and elderly survivors of raids. He had the fed and treated to save the Acholi tribe from extinction.

Seeing a stone structure for grain, ammunition and human beings is amazing to the eye.

“Some unlucky slaves were beheaded or shot dead here,” emotionally said Okello. “You see that black stain on the rock. It is human blood, shed by some slaves who were killed here, it can never be erased.”



with guidance from the “mouth” who faces the “eyes” and whose back is to the field. The goal is to test how well the three people can coordinate with the eyes using hand signals directed towards the mouth who in turn verbalizes the instructions to the ears. It is a definite coordination and team building activity. And for those who seek to conquer their fear of heights or to just enjoy the thrill of temporary flight, the recreation project also houses a ziplin.

It was a definite thrill. Another activity that will have you testing your limits is called the Leap of Faith. A person climbs up a tall vertical log and while harnessed, has to jump a distance onto another log. Should you miss the target, the harness will keep you from meeting the ground head on but that feeling of falling can be quiet exhilarating. As its name suggests, the Recreation Project is an amazing way to pass your time as you engage in fun, challenging activities.



I also had the opportunity to scale Guru Guru. Holding spiritual value at one point of its base to the locals, it provides a definite physical challenge in scaling it. Comprised of many large boulders stacked in what appears a haphazardly manner, to get to the top is no easy feat. I was put to my limit physically and mentally. Because they are boulders, jumping over areas where one boulder ends and another begins can be quite heart stopping and discouraging. However, our tour guides assured us that many have made the climb and listening to them and trusting yourself will help you achieve one of the best views you could get in your life. Once you make the arduous climb, the view at the top is breathtaking. You can see miles and miles of land. It is honestly one of my best experiences.

And should you choose you would like to relax and unwind, I had the chance to visit just a place like that called Gulu Gardens. The place has spacious gardens that can be used for tennis, soccer, and any other activity you may choose to engage in. it also has a 50 meter pool that can be used for cooling down and any other water games. For the more experienced swimmer, the deep end will meet your satisfaction and for

those who prefer to stay in the shallow end, it has just the right amount of height to be comfortable in.

With recent developments, more hotels have come up whose ambiances are impeccable and whose service is superb. One example of this is Bana Hotel. It has very affordable rates, shaded sitting area, plush outdoor coaches, a pool, and sunbathing chairs.

Gulu is a definite recommendation from me to you not only because of the places

you can visit and the experiences you will go through but also because of the lessons you can learn about yourself. To relax and have fun is the goal or you can also see how far you can push yourself mentally in order to achieve a task. Apart from the activities I mentioned above, I had the chance to engage in many more which helped me to grow significantly spiritually, physically and mentally. If you are in need of a fun filled but equally exciting visit to any destination, Gulu is the place to be.

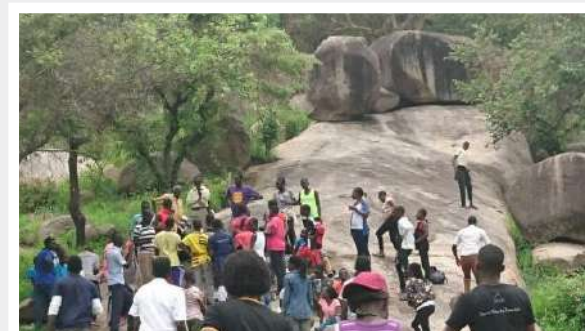
Some of the other activities we engaged in



The group getting ready to do the “minefield”.



A candid moment inside one of the Guru Guru caves.



The base of Guru Guru



Playing netball



Playing football

Beneath the Chaos

Michael
Turyakira

The sharp rays of what promises to be a simmering hot day pierce through Kampala's morning sky setting the entire city aglow with brilliant dashes of golden radiance. Almost on cue, as though the light were some invisible yet secretly comprehended signal between the land and its people, a city comes to bustling life. This is Kampala, Uganda's capital city and melting pot for the nation's multitude of cultures, traditions, businesses, people and cuisines.

Surprisingly, for all its monumentally towering skyscrapers, albeit most lacking in architectural inspiration, Kampala's business seems to all be conducted in the open streets, a sale here, a pitch there, a meal in the open alley, a deal in the parking lot. The city is a hive of activity from the break of dawn till sunset, a chaotic mangling of man and machine unapologetically bumping into and against each other in a spirited game of guts, grit and sheer determination to survive, and every once in a while, thrive.

Beneath the disarray, underneath the blood, sweat and tears expended by the city folk in their tantalizing maneuver through a labyrinth of bland-looking arcades, the city holds the very soul of an entire nation. Uganda's capital, set on the legendary seven hills of Mengo, Rubaga, Namirembe, Nakasero, Old Kampala, Makerere and Mulago has expanded in years past to cover at least twenty-one hills and perched atop each of the traditional seven is a compelling story of culture, religion, leadership, power, knowledge and healing embedded in rich tales of Odysseus proportions.



The Nakasero hill, strategically positioned at the heart of the new Kampala also serves as a political stronghold of the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) government, housing the palatial state house and surrounded by head offices of prominent institutions critical to the running of normal government business. A stone-throw away from the president's official residence and probably of even greater significance, the colossal independence monument casts an imposing glance upon the city sprawling out from its sacred foundations.

The towering sculpture commemorating Uganda's break from colonial rule shows a visibly ecstatic infant being unveiled, or rather more accurately, unshackled and presented to the world, a fitting tribute to the young nation which gained its independence on 9th October, 1962 and yet still struggles to completely shake off the chains of colonialism to-date.

A gigantic concrete monument set a few feet further, again strategically overlooking the busy city centre reveals Sir Edward Mutesa II, Uganda's first president post-independence while the constitutional square, complete with a set of stone tablets in honour of the place where the land's first set of laws were promulgated flanked by the World War II monument, lend a compelling narrative to the backdrop of Uganda's noble history, a stable launchpad for future glories.

A valley of chaos and bloodshed

Down Nakasero hill and into the valley is downtown Kampala, and this is where things start to get really messy, literally. Inside Kisenyi Market and surrounding business hubs like Kisenyi and Owino, the air takes on a muskier feel, exacerbated by the incessant and deafening cacophony of noises from metal workers to carpenters, from mechanics to electronics dealers blaring local tunes through thunderous sound systems while street vendors yell prices and toss merchandise in the faces of bewildered passers-by.

Hidden underneath these scenes of exasperating mayhem in the low-lying stretches of Kampala and deeply embedded in Uganda's grand history are a series of indelible markers commemorating the gripping story of some of the Uganda Martyrs, canonized heroes who laid their lives down for their faith in the mid-1880s during the reign of 'Sekabaka' (King) Mwanga who ruled over Buganda Kingdom within which Kampala is located.

At Nakivubo, Kisenyi, in downtown Kampala, a poorly drained former swampland turned local business



The independence monument commemorates Uganda's rebirth (Courtesy photo)



A shrine erected in honour of Uganda Martyrs St. Balikuddembe and St. Athanasius in downtown Kampala (Courtesy photo)

hub usually susceptible to flooding during the rainy seasons, the names of St. Joseph Mukasa Balikuddembe and St. Athanasius Bazzekuketta are forever etched in the echelons of Uganda's history as well as the hearts of Catholic faithful who throng the shrine erected in their honour at the place where they were murdered at the orders of the king. The former was one of the king's senior advisors who voiced his

displeasure at the killing of Anglican Bishop James Hannington and his companions on October 29th, 1885.

Unimpressed with Balikuddembe's criticism which he interpreted as an act of gross insubordination, the King condemned him to death. On 15th November 1885, Balikuddembe was taken to a swamp near Nakivubo where he was beheaded and his body thrown onto a pile of burning wood. Joseph Mukasa Balikuddembe would go down in history as the first Uganda Martyr in a gruesome crackdown on religious faithful that followed and claimed the lives of at least forty-five young men in a story that meets its epic climax at Namugongo, 12km outside the city centre where most of the Uganda Martyrs were burned alive. A shrine erected in their honour is one of the Uganda's and indeed Africa and the world's most iconic churches with a gripping story to match.



Buganda's administrative headquarters in Bulange, Mengo is the seat of the kingdom's parliament (Courtesy www.buganda.or.ug)

The glorious Mengo peak

A brief trek up the adjacent incline reveals Mengo hill in all its majestic glory. Of all the hills upon which Kampala is built, perhaps none bears more significance than Mengo where the imposing "Lubiri" or palace is an object of universal wonder. Mengo, rising over 4,000ft above sea-level is the seat of the Kabaka (ruler) of Buganda, the largest and richest of Uganda's ancient kingdoms which still retains much of its power and influence over the nation's political and socio-economic landscapes.

Such is the reverence accorded to Buganda kingdom with its seat at Mengo hill that even during colonial days, they were always granted considerable autonomy by the British colonialists due to the huge amount of loyalty and respect the kingdom's top hierarchy and particularly the king enjoyed and still enjoys among his adoring subjects.

Post-independence, and even with the country adopting more dynamic political set-ups leading to an eventual dive into multi-party politics, Buganda has strived to keep intact its core shape, leadership,



Infront of Bulange Mengo

values, culture and traditions that made her a force to reckon with from as far back as the 14th century.

Illustrating this power in every sense is the Kabaka's Lake, located a few hundred meters from the royal palace, the largest man-made lake in Uganda. It was commissioned by the now largely infamous Kabaka Mwanga, and dug by his loyal subjects as a channel to connect to his other palace in Munyonyo on the outskirts of Kampala and eventually to Lake Victoria, the second-largest fresh water lake in the world, only exceeded in size by Lake Superior in North America.

The 'Royal Mile' also known as Kabaka'njagala Road, a stretch of rich history and heritage connecting two major seats of Buganda Kingdom, the royal palace (Lubiri) and her Parliament (Bulange) also sits on Mengo hill. The straight stretch of road that connects the two imposing structures is lined with sculptural symbols on either side in recognition of the fifty-six clans of Buganda, each with its own unique heritage.

The official royal palace, built by Kabaka Daudi Cwa in 1922 invokes bloody tales from

Uganda's past especially the 1966 siege by Uganda's former president Apollo Milton Obote and his then-military commander and later-president Idi Amin Dada as they sought to abolish kingdoms and usurp their power and property. The ensuing two-day violence as loyal subjects answered the war drums and rushed to protect their leader, clashing with the far superiorly armed and trained government forces, culminated into the deaths of over three hundred civilians and is a stain on the nation's past that casts an important light on the need for a peaceful co-existence between political leaders and their more cultural and traditional counterparts.

And so, to the casual, disinterested visitor, Kampala is nothing but a hive of endless activity, maddening traffic and mostly uninspiring structures. However, for the discerning travel enthusiast, the city represents an insightful interaction with welcoming people, stunning nature, rich history, religion, culture and tradition that should be savoured intimately and wholeheartedly.

A stunning beauty beneath the chaos.

The Antidote of Civilization

By: ORUKA IVAN

If I had to live my life without you in it, my days would have been so empty because I find my soul and body up in you. A minute in you is an entire lifetime. When I am lonely and lost in my own thoughts, you always 'kidep' (pick) me. You are my refuge, the only bee in my bonnet. I am just so crazy in love with you my isolated, lonely village champion. I call you my destiny. Your face is always brimming with unrivaled beauty in diversity, a jungle of eternal internal happiness. You are just an entire state of the mind. Admittedly, a rare find this day and age.

Honestly speaking, my love for you is incomparable to Romeo and Juliet. Perhaps anyone would and will fall in love with you instantly the moment they set their eyes and feet into your periphery. Believe (you) me, her fragile heart is a blue ribbon so full

of bells and whistles. I don't mean to butter you up or perhaps sell ice to eskimos but falling in love with her is as easy as ABC. In fact your happiness and joy will already be in the bag before you reach her because of the aura she radiates.

However, getting to her marvelous heart in the true wilderness at the cross roads of the Kenyan, Sudanese and Ugandan ecosystems isn't for the weak. It requires one to be a doubting Thomas and go through thick and thin. Utmost bravery and unwavering endurance for over ten hours from Gulu city in Northern Uganda through the bumpy dust-generous roads is a must have. Here, the clouds of dust congest the skies bleaching everything along their path to their likeness. But this journey alone is a mind blowing adventure on its own.

The stunning views of the colorful sunflower fields are an alluring beauty. The amazing crystal clear natural sights of the dry, flat, vast and bushy land will get you thinking you have reached the end of the world. I mean to say that she is the definition of the phrase 'no-village-ahead'. Concentrated intense remoteness will journey with you all the way and later usher you into the rare slice of Uganda. Everything around her and inside her means turning back the hands of time.

Arguably, she is the terrestrial paradise. Her rugged valleys are full of wonders and surprises. I am usually a yellow-bellied person and yet I don't fear or believe in magic but I must confess that if I have ever seen and believed it all at once, then it was in her. Like sincerely speaking, where on earth do rivers flow but with no water, sausages grow on trees, the birds urinate just like humans, the desert with so many thick forests but without trees, and the animals so monogamous to the extent that I was inspired to shun my adulterous ways?

In the same vein, roaming her plains are the world's tallest animals, largest land animals, fastest animals, tiniest of the crocodiles, largest of the birds, biggest of the eggs in the history of the earth, and the unique king of the jungle, one that climbs trees. This is the only place where the zebra and the giraffe are found together. In fact the seductive Borassus palm forests will get you proposing to your girlfriend/boyfriend because of the unmatched inner feeling that comes once in a blue moon, a feeling so endemic to this place only.

Surely, if you want to live more years in a short time then you ought to abscond to the great north-east cosmos of Uganda, a place as rich as a sultan. The home to the last relatives of the various extinct flora and fauna, the last section of the biblical Noah's ark. Call her an empty tin but she is always speaking in the language of roars, bellows, chirps, trumpets, squeals, and snorts among others. From the cacophony of birdsongs, it is a no brainer to know that singing competitions are eternal here. This is just a daring lure so irresistible. When we turn off the light, the daystar lives and rests in the comfort of the rugged ranges rising from Mt. Morungole and setting in Mt. Moroto. All the way down through the rift valley escarpment are the aggregated thatched huts "manyattas" spotted at intervals

These are homes to the Karamojong, the tribesmen of these place who astonishingly are still stuck in a time warp. These warrior-Nomads are from another world, another way of life just so dissimilar with our own. They are still living in their very ancient, backward primitive ancestral ways. They are literally the cure and the antidote of civilization.

Tradition and rituals are the backbone and DNA of the daily everyday lives.

The children are always au naturel and the adults scarcely dressed. Their bodies are all filled with markings some of which are symbols, allegory, personifications, metaphors or analogies. Their cultural dance is just so distinct, inviting and





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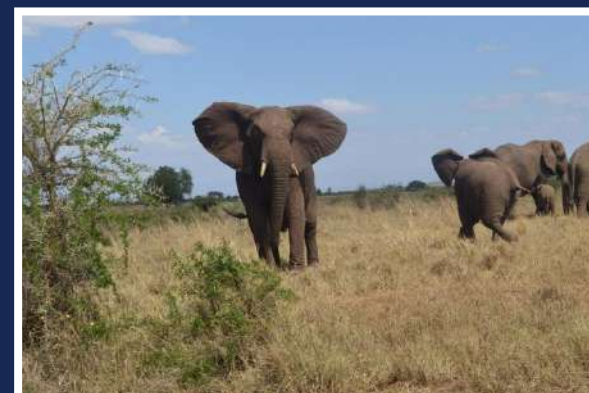
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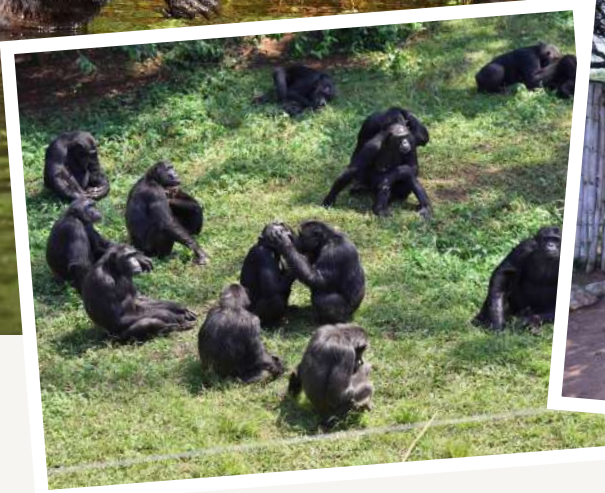
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effortlessly adorable. It is a land of beautiful organic women where art and crafts makes the difference. Sometimes when you close your eyes you won't see. This place has no

Wi-Fi but you will surely get a connection of a lifetime. Kidepo valley National Game Park is a "heaven" you must ascend to before the heavens.





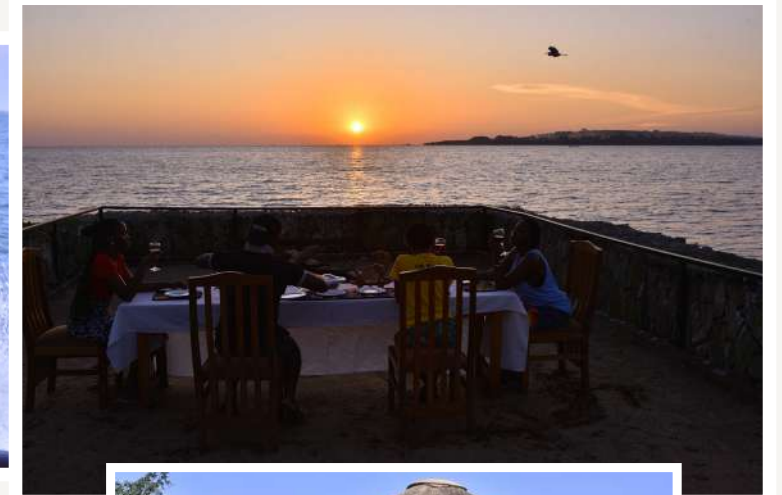
A short and sweet Ngamba experience

By Patricia Kamusiime

It was a crisp afternoon and the sun was beaming brilliantly in the sky. Anticipation filled the air while I awaited the arrival of my friends and every passing moment dragged on slower. One by one, they showed up at Water Front beach where we were to board the boat. The thrill of setting off together ignited more excitement and soon with a few introductions given to us about the chimpanzee island, we strapped on our life jackets and before we knew it, the boat powered to life. Cruising along the tranquil waves of The Victoria, there was less chatter and a few occasional giggles as we all were captivated by the tranquil and rhythmic crashing of the shimmering waves against the boat.

Arriving at Ngamba Island after 45 minutes, we alighted the boat and were warmly received by the hosts who were very

hospitable. The welcome was giving, “mi casa, es su casa” because I immediately felt at home. We trudged along the beach sand and I couldn’t help getting distracted for a few moments by the many egrets that were perching on the gabion wall while Amos, our guide recounted the history of the chimpanzee island and how it came to be an actual sanctuary to the endangered animals. The chimpanzees were taken good care of at the sanctuary where they are fed with supplementary fruits and vegetables on top of what they gather from the forest on the island. We had arrived just on time to see the afternoon chimpanzee feeding. While the guides prepped to feed the apes, we were introduced to the different chimpanzees and their names along with a background on how they got to the sanctuary. Some had been recovered from



poachers who were bidding them to highest buyers while others were confiscated from civilians who attempted to keep them as pets. At the heart of the island behind the fence, the chimpanzees strolled about while the others engaged in playful antics. Their agile movements created a lively spectacle with swings and gentle wrestling matches echoing through the trees. With 98.7% of their DNA similar to that of humans, the mammals are highly intelligent and once they got a whiff of the supplement snacks being brought by the guides, all hell broke loose on their side of the fence. Somersaulting, clapping, pant hooting as they raised their hands and jumping to catch the assortment of green peppers, apples and eggplants raining down from the other end of the fence.

By this time, my own stomach was churning like machines in a butter factory. Having experienced the chimpanzee feeding, we walked at a steady pace to the dining area set inside the grass thatched structure. We sat ourselves on the dining table and soon we were greeted with an aroma wafting through the air which made my stomach rumble more, in protest against the prolonged anticipation for a satisfying meal. We were invited to serve ourselves. There was enough food for us and after serving ourselves, we indulged in the sumptuous meal. Every bite was a medley of flavors dancing on my palate. The richness of the dishes, coupled with the perfect balance of textures, brought to life a culinary experience that was nothing short of astonishing. Each crumb felt like a celebration which left a lingering satisfaction that surpassed the mere act of eating. I was sated.

Shortly after our mouthwatering meal, we were ushered to nicely furnished bandas overlooking the lake where we would be spending the night. Once we were settled in, we sprawled on the beds to catch our breath from all the excitement earlier in the day. The open-air design allowed a gentle breeze to weave through, settling calmly into the room tempting us to snooze. With one last adventure for the day on our itinerary, we dragged ourselves out of the rooms and moved to the pier where we got onto the boat and cruised to the unfenced side of the island with open forest where the chimpanzees usually come to take a dip in the water or forage for succulent leaves. Letting out a pant hoot, Amos was calling out to the chimpanzees, and soon enough; they started to slowly trickle through the forest shrubs appearing at the beach. Tempting them to come closer with oranges, carrots and chopped pieces of cassava, some dared to wade through the water to get as close as they could to the boat but had to stop at some point. With heavy muscles under their black fur, the chimpanzees are not able to swim and float like humans do thus rendering the water unsafe for them making their attempts to get to the boat futile. We returned to the island with close-up National Geographic worthy images of the chimpanzees splashing in the water and swinging in the tree branches on our phones.

The hosts were a very thoughtful bunch and had set a table of five overlooking the water and enveloped by the warm hues of the evening sky, we watched the sun dip under the water. We savored the riveting sight before us as the horizon transformed into a canvas painted with vibrant shades of orange, light purple and pink. As soon as the orange ball dipped under the water, I let out a satisfied sigh and sipped from my glass of wine. Dinner passed quite quickly and the blazing camp fire that had been made beckoned me over to the sandy area where the crackling flames danced in a spellbinding rhythm. The sky above us revealed a tapestry of twinkling lights as if each star tried to outshine the other and as the camp fire glowed on, the flames cast a gentle light on our faces. Around the fire, with the world asleep, everything was still save for distant boat engines humming and our soft voices trading stories with occasional laughter punctuating the peace and soon I felt sleep start to creep up on me. We bid our goodnights and each returned to the comfort of our rooms where we fell asleep to nature's soothing lullaby from the rhythmic sound of waves.

I was awakened by the bird song outside my room. Stepping onto the front porch, the sun's first light colored the sky with pink-

golden hues which were reflected on the water below. The mist that hovered above the lake's surface slowly disappeared as the dawn fully took over and we prepped for our journey back to the mainland. Converging at the breakfast table, while sipping our tea we discussed, what a beautiful experience this was and how we couldn't wait to go and share with whoever cared to listen to us tattling about the marvel that Ngamba Island is!

About Ngamba Chimpanzee Island

Ngamba Chimpanzee island, is part of the Koome acheapelago in Mukono district. Being an island, it can only be accessed by means of water transport. Most of the visitors access the sanctuary from Entebbe municipality, a distance which normally takes less than one hour of sail. Under the management of Chimpanzee Sanctuary Wildlife Conservation Trust (CSWCT), a non-government organisation, Ngamba Chimpanzee sanctuary was established in October 1998 to give refuge to orphaned and confiscated chimps. 95% of the 100-acre island is forested where the apes roam freely in a semi-natural environment whereas the 5% remaining space is a reserve of the animal clinic, staff quarters and some visitors' accommodation facilities.



The enchanting Lemala Wild Waters Lodge

By Brenda Asimwe

Pictures and verbal descriptions do not do justice to the Lemala Wild Waters Lodge and its surroundings. It is a place to be experienced. Accessed by boat, a guest has to book in advance to be picked up from the mainland. It is only a few minutes ride to the peninsula where you are met by hotel staff and fresh off a rowing boat. There is a wooden suspended pathway and walking through it, one is serenaded by the birds chirping, the forest air hangs heavy engulfing you in airy hugs. The waterfall is heard ringing beyond the trees. On either side of the main walkway, there are paths that branch off leading to cottages perched up on timber. From a distance they look like tree houses.

Upon reaching the reception area, the scene that welcomes you is so breathtaking. From

up-close, you see the water so fierce as it rumbles over the rocks, tumbling over each other, the plants standing tall from the rocks to dodge the water symbolizing defiance, birds nestling in their nests swinging over the water as they scoot from one tree branch to another. You can't help feeling a little jealous of the birds as they get to wake up in this enchanting scenery every day. The sun was up and coming down a little hard but at the same time being cooled off by the waters. We basked in the sun while sipping on some cold drinks. A few metres away from us on bare rocks lay a congregation of mighty egrets' sunbathing.

On the rocks, water could plunge, forming a vapour-like atmosphere, which when married to the sun rays, created a magnificent rainbow. Several green island-



like thickets within the river gave shelter to the birds and dragonflies which could be seen swinging from one end to another. There was visibly life on the river as many creatures expressed their interdependence with the surrounding environment as though not bothered by the roaring waters of river Nile.

Located on roughly six hectares on Kalagala island in Jinja district, Lemala wild waters lodge lies on a unique private island midstream within the mighty river Nile. With over twenty cottages lying several metres



other natural materials, we retired. Charging our electronic gadgets as waiters and waitresses took our orders, we could still catch a 360 degrees gaze of the flowing water going around the rock-mass by which we had sought comfort. We were each served with drinks of choice as we waited for dinner.

The taste of a deep-fried tilapia which I had ordered for, is what I can describe but could evidently tell that other colleagues were enjoying the taste of all cuisines they had ordered for. Leanne, the general manager, could interject at every interval of our eating, to find out whether the food was tasty, whether we needed more soup or any other drink. Hospitality is a tourism product that has helped Uganda top most of the destinations in the world. And Leanne was alive to the fact.

As it was dusking, there was one phenomenon I had not explored- the swimming pool. Yes, a swimming pool in river Nile! Built on one end of the island by the left side of the restaurant, was an amazing swimming pool surrounded by

from each other, separated by buttressed trees and natural vegetation, and yet interlinked by wooden bridges cutting through the thick vegetation, Lemala white waters lodge is a breathtaking phenomenon. The sound of roaring waterfalls with that of singing birds, created a composition of natural melodies punctuated with evidently clean and natural air, leaving no doubt about the awesomeness of the creator. Each of the accommodation facilities was built in such an angle which permitted a view of the river. By the balcony, one could sit or stand and watch in awe, how beautiful Uganda is.

In the gigantic restaurant thatched with neatly aligned grass, reeds, poles among

the running waters of the river. Freaky as it seemed to be, to dip in the pool waters, was so refreshing and revitalising. Swimming from one corner of the pool to another, under the warm rays of the setting sun was a feeling beyond expression. Several birds could wave as they flew back to respective nests. We sat by the balcony while kissing the glasses of wine and bottles of beer as we all exclaimed in amazement of how Uganda is endowed with too much beauty. Later retiring to the beautiful exhilarating warm cottages for the night and what transpired therein, will be a story for another day. The scenery and experience that Lemala wild waters has to offer is something everyone needs to experience.



The Batwa Community

The Batwa casually referred to as the Pygmies, used to dwell in forests of greatlakes region where they sustainably relied on hunting and gathering fruits up to the year 1991 when they were displaced by government to establish Bwindi and Mgahinga national parks. The tribe became squatters, living on edges of hosting communities, metres away from once their homel and the forest.

They used to sleep either in caves, well-bent tree trunks or above in tree branches. Sleeping in caves was most favourable for cold nights with a family gathering.

This way, they would light fire which was used as both the source of light and warmth, as well as scaring away dangerous animals.

Most of the tools used by the Batwa during that time, were specially meant for survival hence no community member could strive for wealth which usually comes with greed. In that regard, Batwa could not cut down trees for reasons outside their necessities.

David Kakuru, a leader of the Batwa community in Ruhija sector of Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, Mpungu subcounty in Kanungu district. Photo by Change A Life- Bwindi.

Julius
LUWEMBA

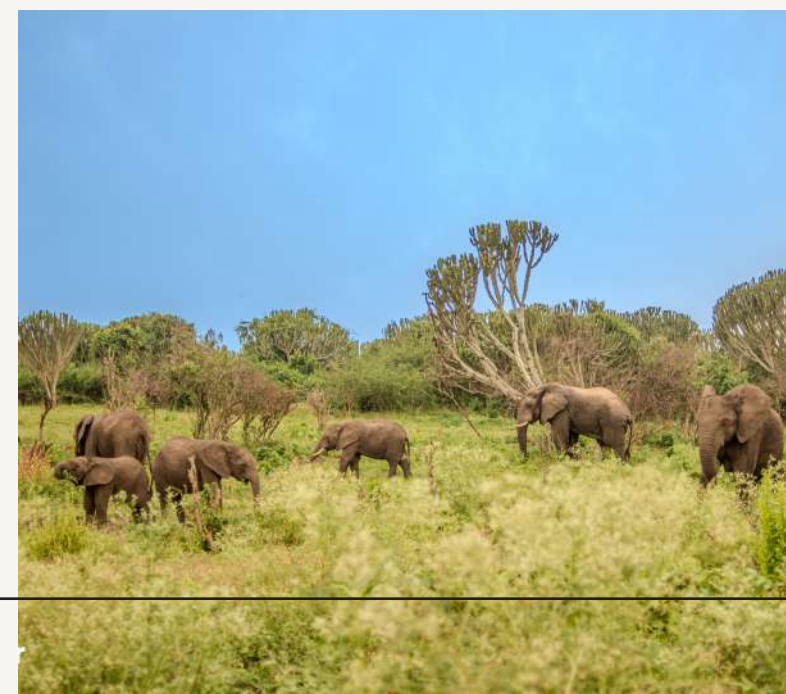
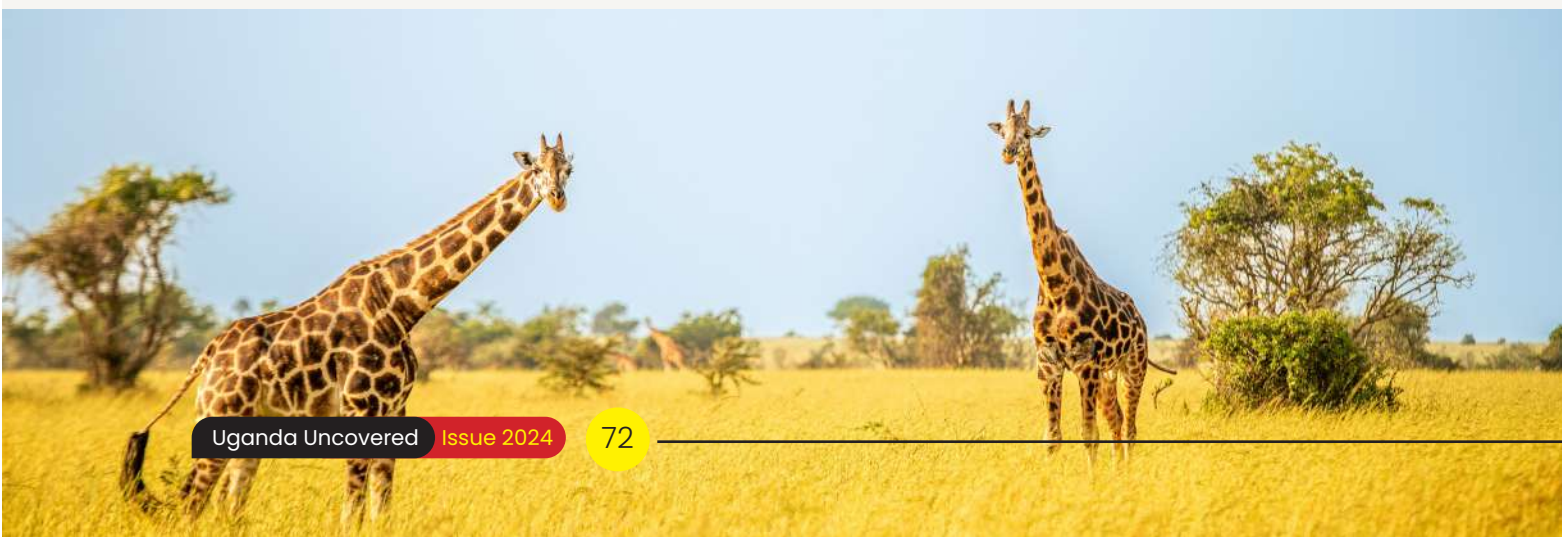
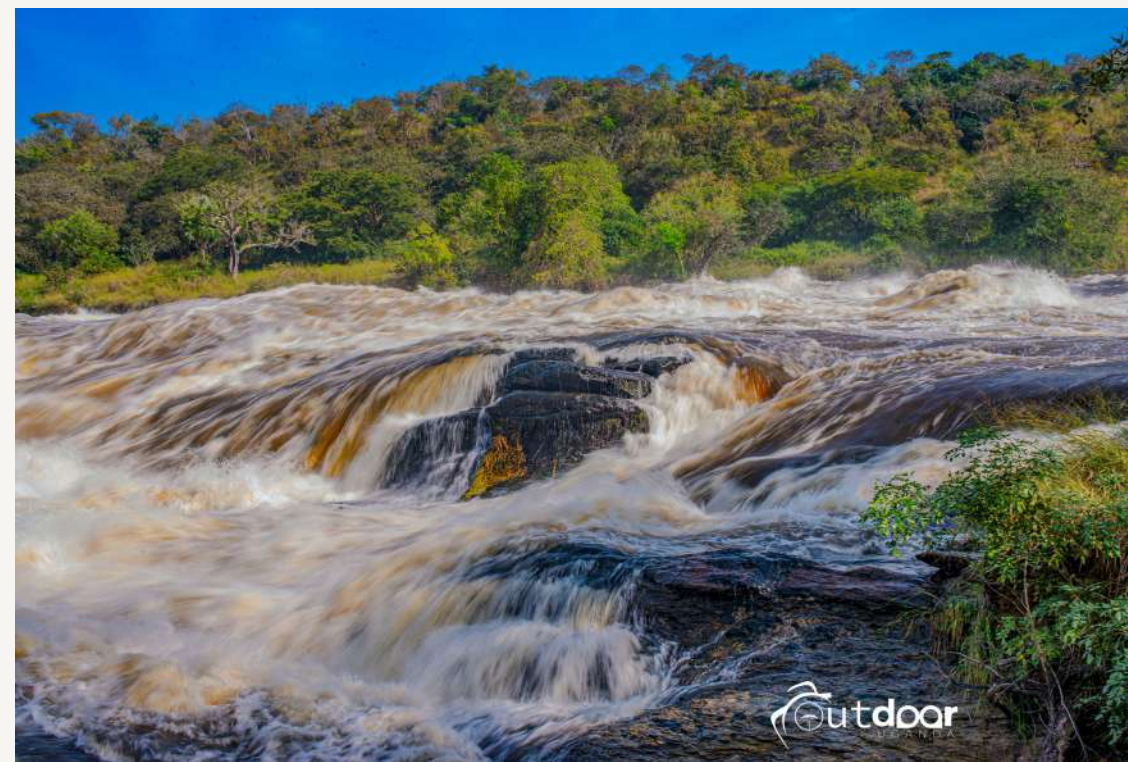
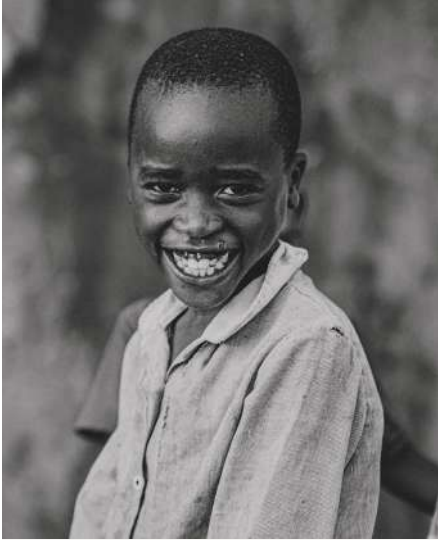


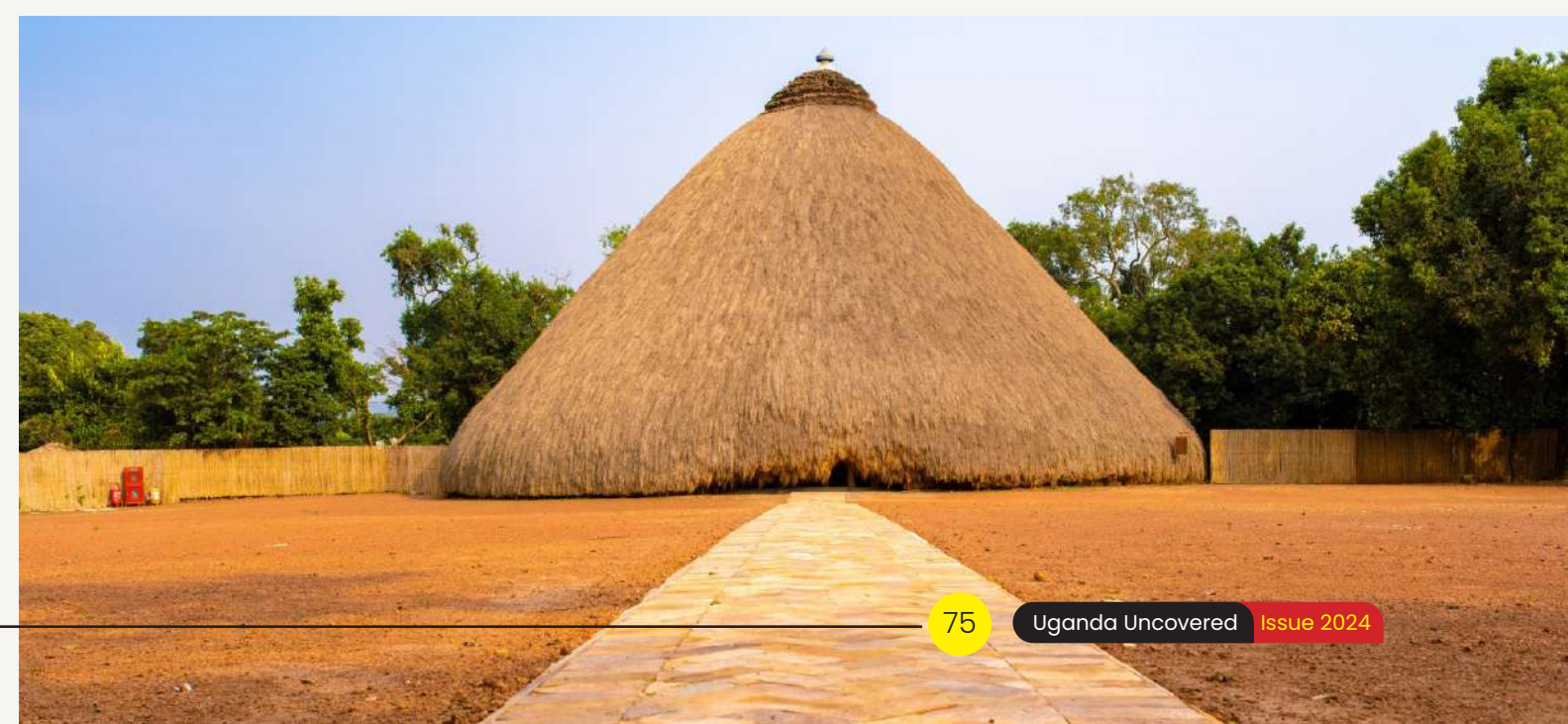
Photo Exhibition

Tourists are visibly awed by the stunning beauty of Kazinga Channel in Queen Elizabeth National Park. The 40km stretch of Kazinga channel that connects Lake George and Edward, is one of such places that justify the description of Uganda being the “Pearl of Africa,” where visitors can never run short of activities such as boat cruises. The photo was selected by a panel of Editors from three major publishing Media Houses, stating: It shows the beautiful clear sky, flora, fauna, water, human element and infrastructure – all in one frame.

It depicts an activity in the form of a gesture where the couple is astonished by the beauty of this part of Uganda.

Photo by Gusa Travels









Sharp's Island

A Perfect Blend Of Beauty And History

I'm seated within a meter from a towering bonfire, two sticks of maize are bursting ready below, a chillingly cold beer hangs mid-air between my knuckles and my eyes are married to the firefly flickering in the darkness above. My mind is lost in the moment, but it keeps coming back to me that I'm here - at peace on an island in the middle of nowhere. How did I get here?

Five hours ago, my friends and I stared excitedly at the windscreen of our old Toyota RAV4 rattling with bumps in the eight-kilometer dusty road from Kabale town to Lake Bunyonyi. For me, the excursion was a much-needed alteration in my lackluster medical school routine. A weekend-long camping at an island didn't seem like a bad idea after the kind of semester I'd had.

"Cabbages, do you think we will need cabbages?" Emma asks nonchalantly as we approach the lakeshore. He doesn't seem inclined to get any. Our idea of an authentic camping experience includes cooking our own food. We've been told we won't have

access to any towns at the island, so we are buying groceries before set off.

A forty-minute boat ride gets us there, but the only structure in place is an unfinished wooden two-storey that passes for a residence cottage. We are all grossly underwhelmed. Lake Bunyonyi is dotted with up to 29 islands; how could we possibly land on this one?

"We can't stay here," Peace protests, twiddling her thumbs. The resort custodian as well is not excited about the idea of refunding our camping deposit. Devastated, we resolve that the money is not worth the trouble. After all, we are in the middle of nowhere. A few phone calls and recommendations and we are back on the waters, en route to a new unexpected destination; Sharp's Island.

A boat ride on Lake Bunyonyi is unlike any other you'll have. Every movement is a subtle reminder that it is Africa's second deepest. The waters meander forlornly between floating islands, stretching out to touch the



lush green foothills that contain them in all corners. The terraced hills that abut them harbor over 200 water and migratory bird species, a spectacle for avid bird watchers.

Natives believe the lake exhibits human-like emotions. The evening of our travel, he was angry. His tides, rising in amplitude, jolted the boat precariously from left to right.

We are all quiet, but there is a palpable tension in the air. None of us can swim. "If, God forbid, something happens," I quickly block the thought out of my head.

We have arrived at last - safely at Sharp's Island. A worn-out mint-green wooden dock with a "NO SWIMMING HERE" placard greets and ushers us to a mossy stone-walk in the midst of green thickets blooming with yellow Indian chrysanthemum daisies that forms something of an aisle.

Close by, there's a rabbit tucked in thick lakeshore bulrush - busy munching away. I smile. "Maybe, this is the place," someone at the back hopes.

Soon enough, we would discover a haven behind my amusement with little rodents gnawing sweetly at their evening meal and our wavering faith in conquering the unknown.

We are told that the island, originally called Njuyeera ("white cottage"), was renamed after a Scottish missionary doctor, Leonard Sharp, who resided there in the 1930s and championed the fight against Leprosy. He also transformed the island into one of the most sought-after areas on the lake.



The reception is warm. Diana, who managed the place, gives the group a quick tour around. Our hopes begin to crescendo. These framed black-and-white pictures, portraying the island's transformation from the 1920's and 30's when the Sharp family still lived there, preserve a preference for a curious eye.

There are four cottages here, all named after Dr. Sharp's children. We visited Grace, the only one unoccupied at the time. The lodges are made almost exclusively with traditional methods using local materials.

Later, we set up our tents.

Over the following days, the island would turn out to be our perfect gateway from the rowdiness of town. On our first night, a ceiling of a moonless cloud and silence interrupted by cooing doves reminded us that we were indeed a long way from home. We stayed up late, conversing, laughing and dancing Ekyitaguriro (the traditional Bakiga dance).

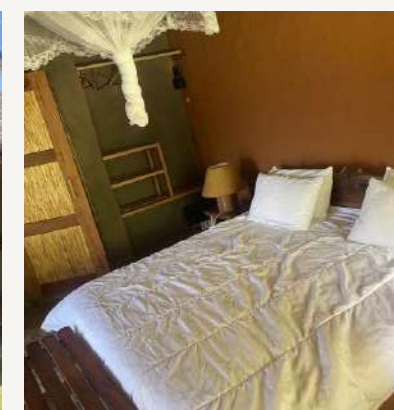
I'd always longed to wake up to the sight of the lake. Mornings here are quiet: punctuated by bird songs and the sound of water brushing at the contorted banks. Seeing the reflection of the sunrise ripple at the water surface filled my spirit. What a beauty!

Sharp serves as a perfect reference point for Punishment Island. This 215 square feet raised muddy platform, locally known as 'Akampene', sits within about 100 meters from Sharp. There, legends hold, banished pregnant young girls were dumped with no food, cursed to starve and die. Now deserted and devoid of life, Akampene remains as a reminder of the dark history of long lost cultural practices of communities around the lake and how far long they've come.

Canoe rides in the evenings – for someone who had never had one – were breathtaking.

On one of our rides, Herbert, the island's chef who grew up and has lived around the lake all his life, keeps mentioning that it is 900 meters deep: seemingly bewildered by the sheer magnitude of this fact. You can tell from his voice that this lake has grown to become a delicate part of him. Village walks and hikes were equally enlightening.

By the end of our trip, Chef Herbert was no longer the only one in religious awe of this place. It is therapeutic: the air is very thin and smells like fresh wild flowers, the sun is gentle on the skin and the people are really friendly. It took blissful ignorance and a wild turn of events to get here, but leaving was immeasurably bittersweet.





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Hidden Treasures Of West Nile

My 100% recommended travel destination in Uganda is the west Nile region. This region is multi-ethnic comprising of four main tribes: Alur, Kakwa, Madi and Lugbara. It is blessed with beautiful people, culture, sceneries that are unknown and numerous food delicacies. It is boarded by two countries –Sudan and DR Congo. The region was initially part of DR Congo until it was annexed to Uganda in April, 1914. One cannot help but thank God for this beautiful region.

As one drives to West Nile region, we arrive at the Majestic Karuma falls located about 250Kms from the capital city. It is found along the Kampala – Gulu highway at the point where the road crosses the River Nile. The falls stretch on an area of approximately 97 kilometers by road northeast of Masindi town and close to the Murchison Falls national park. The royalty nature of the karuma falls commands attention as you draw closer, it roars like the lions in the jungle, one is dumbfounded at the site of the royal water falls. Usually the monkeys are by the road side ushering us to the karuma falls hoping to receive bananas from the visitors.

The arrangement of the great beautiful rocks entwined with the great outlook, appearance of the Nile and the impressive white foam. The first time I saw these water falls, I could not help but stare. The being in me that was tired of the long journey was rejuvenated by this creation that was so full of life and energy.

Each area in this region amazes you with the beauty nature has gifted it, a distance away from the karuma falls is the Murchison falls national park. Located 305 kilometers north of Kampala in Masindi district, the park can be accessed by both road and flight. The falls are the main tourist attraction in this

place which led to the uptake of the name Murchison falls. it is also blessed with great views of giraffes, buffaloes, Uganda kobs, lions, baboons, chimpanzees, and elephants. The common activities in the park are game drives, boat cruise, bird watching, nature walks, hiking to the top of the falls and boat cruise.

I am personally so interested in the hikes to the top of the falls due to the relaxing sounds of the falls. In case of accommodation one can take one of the campsites at an affordable price at Red Chili rest camp karuma fall camp site, Paraa, Safari lodge etc.

The west Nile region still remains with a number of untapped potentials starting with the magnificent entry gate to the region – The Mighty Pakwach bridge. Pakwach district is approximately 400kms from the capital city. It was an area most known in history for the Gipir and labong tale. It's in Pakwach that we find the panoramic view of the mighty Pakwach Bridge, the calm flow of the river invites you to the peaceful and welcoming nature of the people of west Nile. This bridge marks the beginning of the deeper beauties of the region.

Let the drive through begin, there is much more than just the gate! If the gate is as beautiful as this, then what of the palace! One can already begin to feel the beauty of west Nile begin to feel the beauty of west Nile

Before one leaves Pakwach, don't go without tasting the famous and tasty, finger licking Nang Nang (boneless fish), Angara(salty fish). The fish known as Nang Nang got its name after a princess called Pa Nang (translated as Lady fish) after she was divided into two halves to two different

princes to be thrown into their kingdom rivers so as both of them partake of the richness that shall come their way after they both had captured her heart equally. To bring peace in the land she sacrificed her life. When the bodies were disposed in the river they turned into fish with one rib cage each which applies to this Nang Nang fish to. It is usually found in the less saline waters.

Beyond the gate way to west Nile lays the beautiful hills and seasonal rivers that crisscross villages. The beautiful water falls in Ombavu –Adjumani – Arivu subcounty. The falls are known as Kurr. Just as the name would describe it all, that is the sound of the water. Kurr falls is a hidden gem yet to be tapped by the people in Uganda. The heavenly and pure nature of this place brings forth a refreshing nature in someone. It has one side with the falls but one side with the gentle flow of water that causes a relaxing effect when one choses to be in this place. One can literally here the insects converse due the quiet and calm nature of the area. One other amazing thing about this place is the pond that contains different kind of fish that recognize someone when they call them out to have a meal! The trees

sway away all the panic as they sing along to the beauty of nature. Why leave west Nile without taking a glimpse of Kurr falls and a chance to scout with the mighty Lugbara people.

One cannot leave Westnile without a hear say about the Miradua falls. The falls are hidden beneath the rocks of Maracha district. Miradua water falls are located 20kms from Arua City in lici village. The captivating unique step-water falls cannot get off people’s lips in Arua. The attractive and glorious appearance leaves one dumbfounded. What more than just a day in this place. One can actually camp at this for more relaxing moments with these water falls.

If someone has been to Uganda and has not interfaced with the stunning nature of the west Nile region then they have certainly not done justice to Uganda’s attractions. There is more to explore beyond the horizons, more than just the hospitality in this region but also the untapped beauties.

Welcome to Uganda – Welcome to West Nile!



Nang Nang (boneless fish),



Murchison falls national park.



Majestic Karuma falls



Kurr falls







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