

*The animal has secrets which, unlike the secrets of caves, mountains, seas, are specifically addressed to man.* —John Berger, *Why Look at Animals?*

## TRACKING MAJESTIC MOUNTAIN GORILLAS

### DAYS 1 & 2 *Kigali and Parc National des Volcans, Rwanda*

Talk to someone who's paid a visit to the mountain gorillas of Rwanda's highlands and you are likely to hear near-rhapsodic praise for a rare, beautiful, and often very moving experience.\* Our carefully orchestrated visits begin in Kigali, revitalized Rwanda's charming capital, which we'll tour before heading northwest to the Virunga Volcanoes, a stately chain of jungle volcanoes that top out at Mount Karisimbi's 14,787 feet, higher than any Rocky or Sierra Nevada. We'll settle into the superb *Sabyinyo Silverback Lodge*, a fine base for our wanderings in these almost supernaturally verdant precincts.

\* A friend of ours turned a leafy corner in the mountains and came across a mother gorilla giving birth. "My general optimism quotient—maybe illogically, but very forcibly—rose about 70 percent," he said. "I will carry that memory, and maybe some of that optimism, with me forever."

The next day, led by our guide and his crew, we begin making our way through a forest of trailing vines, trilling bird calls, giant lobelia, and mossy hagenia trees—a Jurassic, emerald world—walking toward an encounter with one

of the park's 12 habituated (meaning they aren't frightened by us) families of mountain gorillas; no more than eight people are allowed to visit any given family for more than an hour each day. Seeing a 450-pound male saunter by only a few yards away is something you'll want to tell your grandchildren's children about.

### DAY 3 *Burera and Ruhondo Lakes*

We'll pay our respects to a different gorilla family today, noting the subtle cultural differences between clans. Later we'll explore the twin lakes of Burera and Ruhondo, blue beauties in a sea of green, and mingle with local folks at a bustling food market in Ruhengeri.

### DAY 4 *Depart Kigali*

We'll make the drive to Kigali for our homeward flights. (One final note: travellers who'd like to visit more of our primate relatives should ask us about easy-to-arrange side trips that put us in contact with chimpanzees and colobus monkeys.)

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