



**BEST OF UGANDA BIRDING TOUR – SHOEBILL, ALBERTINE
RIFT ENDEMIC AND GREAT APES**

01–14 AUGUST 2027

01–14 AUGUST 2028



Shoebill is one of the most sought-after birds in the world and is one of our special targets on this tour!

Overview

This Uganda birding and mammal extravaganza allows you to find the most important birds and primates that Uganda has to offer. **Shoebill** is almost guaranteed. Over 20 Albertine (Western) Rift endemics are also sought, including one of Africa's most fabulous turacos, **Rwenzori Turaco**, and of course the “must-see” **Grauer's** (African Green) **Broadbill**. We have not yet missed **Green-breasted Pitta** on any of our trips – Uganda has become the classic country for finding this otherwise very difficult bird. We also look for other range-restricted birds, such as **Red-faced Barbet**, which is also found in a remote part of Tanzania, excluded from most birding tours to that country. **Ross's Turaco**, **Great Blue Turaco** (almost twice the size of other turacos), and various other birds are virtually garden birds here in Uganda, “the Pearl of Africa”. Other highlights of our Uganda birding tour are a great many primates, such as **Ashy Red Colobus**, **Guereza**, **Eastern (Mountain) Gorilla**, and **Chimpanzee**, not to mention the spectacular scenery, including such famous places as Lake Victoria (the continent's largest lake), Bwindi Impenetrable Forest National Park, and last but not least the Virunga Mountains.



*We have the option to spend some time with **Eastern (Mountain) Gorillas** on this tour.*

This tour runs immediately before our **Eastern Uganda Birding Tour – Fox's Weaver & Localized Specialties**, allowing for a seamless combination into one comprehensive Uganda birding adventure.

PLEASE NOTE: This trip is moderate in terms of fitness required, except for some days that are considered quite strenuous, such as the day of gorilla trekking and the day hike into Mubwindi

Swamp and back. Chimpanzee trekking and looking for Green-breasted Pitta can also involve quite a lot of walking. You are welcome to opt out of any activities if you don't feel you'll manage them. There are also many days of forest birding; please wear appropriate clothing items (dark/neutral clothing and caps instead of very wide-brimmed hats) and be ready to spend good amounts of time on foot with a good chance of soaking rain, so protection for camera gear is advised.

Detailed Itinerary (14 days/13 nights)

Day 1. Arrival at Entebbe International Airport and birding the shore of Lake Victoria

We'll fetch you from Entebbe International Airport and check in at our guest house before starting birding. The dazzling **Black-headed Gonolek**, as well as the striking **Double-toothed Barbet** are both common around Entebbe. **Bat Hawk** and **African Hobby** are sometimes seen around town. **Broad-billed Roller**, **Palm-nut Vulture**, numerous weavers, and perhaps our first **Great Blue Turaco** might be seen as we bird the Entebbe Botanical Garden on the edge of Africa's largest lake.

Overnight: Entebbe



The Great Blue Turaco is magnificent!

Days 2–3. Shoebill and transfer to Lake Mburo National Park

Bypassing the bustling city of Kampala (adjacent to the more pleasant small town of Entebbe), we head for Mabamba Swamp, one of Africa's most accessible sites for the monstrous **Shoebill**. The papyrus-swamp-loving **Red-chested Sunbird**, numerous weaver species that build their

impressively neat nests in the wetlands, coucals, and many tropical waterbirds such as **Lesser Jacana** abound as we do a dugout canoe trip into the huge swamp. **Swamp Flycatcher** is also common here. After seeing **Shoebill**, we continue to our site for **Orange Weaver**, often seeing **Eastern Plantain-eater**, **Ross's Turaco**, large flocks of the noisy **Great Blue Turaco** (the far-carrying calls of which are one of the characteristic sounds of Uganda), **Grey Kestrel**, and a very big, beautiful barbet, **Double-toothed Barbet**. We will also keep an eye open for the localized and scarce **Weyns's Weaver** this morning.

We eventually arrive at Lake Mburo National Park (where we'll spend two nights), which breaks the journey between Entebbe and the southwestern border region of Uganda, where we will look for over 20 Albertine Rift endemics (this region, also known as the Western Rift, is a branch of the Great Rift Valley).

The following morning, we take a boat trip on the lake, and this is one of the easiest places to find **African Finfoot**. We should see the colorful **Papyrus Gonolek** in addition to an array of kingfishers, including the likes of **Malachite Kingfisher**, **Giant Kingfisher**, **Pied Kingfisher**, and the rare **Shining-blue Kingfisher**. In general, this park gives us an excellent opportunity to see a lot of arid-country birds, which can include **Blue-naped Mousebird**, **Bare-faced Go-away-bird**, **Golden-breasted Bunting**, and the incredibly localized, rather "thin-on-the-ground" **Red-faced Barbet**, along with a more widespread East African species, **Spot-flanked Barbet**. **Nubian Woodpecker** is often heard before it is seen. As in most arid-habitat parks in East Africa, a large bird list can be accumulated very fast, and the above species are just a few of the many goodies we expect to find. This is the only place where we're likely to see **Plains Zebra** during our Uganda birding tour, and there are a lot of other mammals as well, such as **Common Hippopotamus**, **Cape Buffalo**, **Waterbuck**, **Bohor Reedbuck**, **Tsessebe (Topi)**, **Common Eland**, and many more.

Overnight: Lake Mburo National Park



Sometimes we see up to five African Finfoots at Lake Mburo.

Days 4–5. Birding the Virunga Mountains region: Mgahinga Gorilla National Park

The **Eastern (Mountain) Gorillas** here freely roam into neighboring Rwanda and the DRC, but with extreme luck we might stumble across them (usually we have to wait until we get to Bwindi Impenetrable Forest National Park, though). One of the main reasons we include this park on our Uganda birding tour is to look for the gorgeous **Rwenzori Turaco**. This park has a lot of bamboo forest, in which we search for **Abyssinian Ground Thrush**. The very rare **Shelley's Crimsonwing** is always possible – this Endangered (IUCN) species seems to be declining and, for once, not because of humans. We may get a head start with some other Albertine Rift endemics, but most of these will have to wait for Bwindi.

Overnight: Kisoro



*The beautiful **Regal Sunbird** is an Albertine Rift endemic.*

Days 6–7. Ruhija, Bwindi Impenetrable Forest National Park

We travel to one of Africa's richest forests for primates and birds, Bwindi Impenetrable Forest National Park, and start in its high-altitude Ruhija part. We'll start birding the forest-covered hills as soon as we arrive, looking for the beautiful **Black Bee-eater** and also trying to find **Grauer's Swamp Warbler** at a roadside site, so that we can reduce the length of the long walk on Day 6, as this warbler occurs right in the lower reaches of Mubwindi Swamp. **Mountain Yellow Warbler** might also be seen, nice to compare with **Papyrus Yellow Warbler**, for which we try another day. A walk most of the way down to this swamp can't be avoided, though, as **Grauer's** (African Green) **Broadbill**, one of Africa's most desirable birds, also occurs there.

The good-looking, highly localized **Yellow-eyed Black Flycatcher** also lurks pretty close to the bottom reaches. The walk down to the site for this broadbill (and back) takes a large part of the day, but this is one of the best birding days of the entire tour. Trip participants usually end up getting a constant stream of life-birds throughout the day, mainly Albertine Rift endemics. **Banded Prinia**, **Mountain Masked Apalis**, **Rwenzori Apalis**, **Chestnut-throated Apalis**, the strange-looking (and dull for a barbet) **Grey-throated Barbet**, **Red-faced Woodland Warbler**, and up to four species of quiet, brightly colored forest finches known as crimsonwings (all of them very difficult, though!) are often encountered. There are far too many high-quality species to list here! We will also spend plenty of time working through several greenbul species, often rather subtle in appearance, as Uganda is exceptionally rich in them, making identification both challenging and rewarding. We do need to mention a couple of the other range-restricted species as well, though, – the very long-tailed **Blue-headed Sunbird**, the dazzling **Regal Sunbird**, **Stripe-breasted Tit**, **Rwenzori Batis**, and also slightly more widespread species like the fabulous **Bar-tailed Trogon** and **Rwenzori Hill Babbler**.

Overnight: Ruhija



*The highly prized **Grauer's (African Green) Broadbill** is another major target.*

Days 8–10. Buhoma, Bwindi Impenetrable Forest National Park: birds and optional gorilla trekking

En route between the higher-altitude Ruhija and the lower-elevation Buhoma sections of the park, we stop to bird “The Neck”, which allows us to see quite a number of species we won’t find elsewhere. **Black Bee-eater** and **Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater** are both quite easy to see here. **Chubb's Cisticola** duets from the thickets. **Black-and-white Shrike-flycatcher** (also known as Vanga Flycatcher) might be seen – this charismatic bird usually moves around a lot (it’s an

extremely lively species) and makes lots of noise as it flies around from one perch to the next. It has a fabulous crest, and the species exhibits obvious sexual dimorphism. The female is chestnut and white, whereas the male is black-and-white with striking yellow eyes. We might also see **Brown-throated Wattle-eye**, **Mackinnon's Shrike**, **Bronzy Sunbird** and several other sunbirds, **African Grey Woodpecker**, **Augur Buzzard**, etc.

Deep-forest birds we'll seek include many more localized endemics that barely get into neighboring countries – **Grauer's Warbler** (not to be confused with Grauer's Swamp Warbler, which we should have already seen), **Bar-tailed Trogon**, **Petit's Cuckooshrike**, **Lühder's Bushshrike**, **Brown-capped Weaver** and other weavers of the forest canopy, **Red-throated Alethe**, and lots of others. We'll be sure to spend time looking for slightly more widespread birds as well, including the skulking **White-spotted Flufftail**, **Red-shouldered Cuckooshrike**, **Olive-bellied Sunbird**, some beautiful forest barbets such as the large **Yellow-billed Barbet**, the dazzlingly bright and shiny, green-and-yellow **African Emerald Cuckoo**, and, last but not least, **Black-billed Turaco**.

Forest-edge birding can be equally rewarding (and often easier for photography!) with such specials as **Dusky Long-tailed Cuckoo**, **Great Blue** and **Ross's Turaco**, **Grey-winged Robin-Chat**, **Black-necked Weaver**, **Red-headed Malimbe**, **Northern Double-collared Sunbird**, **Grey-headed Nigrita** and many others. Over our two full days here, we will spend plenty of time birding the forest trails, forest edge, and adjacent agricultural areas.

At Buhoma, there is the option to spend a day trekking for **Eastern (Mountain) Gorillas** (this is a strenuous activity; if you decide not to join, you'll be taken birding instead, or you can relax or look at and photograph birds around the lodge).

Overnight: Buhoma



Bar-tailed Trogon occurs in the Bwindi Impenetrable Forest.

Day 11. Birds and mammals of Queen Elizabeth National Park

We stop over in Queen Elizabeth National Park (often staying on the Mweya peninsula itself, along the Kazinga Channel) en route to Kibale Forest. England's queen officially opened this national park (well-known for its tree-climbing lions and boasting 100 mammal species and 600 bird species!) in 1954. One of the highlights of our stay here is getting out on the Kazinga Channel by boat and seeing **Nile Crocodile**, **Common Hippopotamus**, and a great many waterbirds. Naturally, we also see **Common Warthog**, **Cape Buffalo**, **Kob**, and a plethora of other mammals. **Giant Forest Hog** usually steals the show, however.

Overnight: Queen Elizabeth National Park



Green-breasted Pitta is another of Africa's most sought-after species we'll be targeting.

Days 12–13. Kibale National Park – the Chimpanzee/Green-breasted Pitta combo

The drive from Queen Elizabeth to another fantastic national park, Kibale, is amazing: We traverse the foothills of the "Mountains of the Moon" (the Ruwenzori Range) and cross the equator, eventually arriving at the richest forest for primates on the African continent. Our main avian target is **Green-breasted Pitta**, which is best found at dawn, when its display call allows us to narrow down its whereabouts (otherwise, despite the jewel-like colors of this bird, it's like looking for a needle in a haystack on the forest floor). While we search for this bird, the atmospheric, quite scary noises of large troops of **Chimpanzees** resonate through the forest. There is also the opportunity to optionally trek for **Chimpanzees**. We should also find some other primates, such as **L'Hoest's Monkey**, **Ashy Red Colobus**, one of the most striking of all African primates, **Guereza** (Eastern Black-and-white Colobus), **Red-tailed Monkey**, **Ugandan Crested Mangabey**, and other monkeys (not to mention the well-built **Olive Baboon**, which wanders around in massive troops,

usually on the ground). We also have a lot of good birds to see, which might include **White-headed Wood Hoopoe**, **Narrow-tailed Starling**, **Black-billed Turaco**, and **Chestnut Wattle-eye**.

Overnight: Bigodi

Day 14. Transfer to Entebbe and departure

After some final birding around Kibale, we return to Entebbe to conclude what promises to be an unforgettable journey. You may depart at any time after 3:00 p.m. For those continuing on our Eastern Uganda Birding Tour, we will overnight in Entebbe before setting off for Pian Upe National Park the following day.

Overnight: Not included

Please note that the itinerary cannot be guaranteed as it is only a rough guide and can be changed (usually slightly) due to factors such as availability of accommodation, updated information on the state of accommodation, roads, or birding sites, the discretion of the guides, and other factors. In addition, we sometimes have to use a different guide from the one advertised due to tour scheduling or other factors.

Tour Details

Duration:	14 days
Group size:	4–6
Dates:	01–14 August 2027 01–14 August 2028
Start:	Entebbe, Uganda
End:	Entebbe, Uganda
Prices:	\$ 7,940 per person sharing, assuming 4–6 participants (2027) \$ 8,600 per person sharing, assuming 4–6 participants (2028)

Single supplement: \$ 520 (2027)
\$ 650 (2028)

Price includes:

All accommodation
Meals (from lunch on Day 1 until breakfast on Day 14)
Unlimited bottled water
Expert tour leader
All entrance and conservation fees
All ground transport, including airport pick-up and drop-off
Boat rides in Lake Mburo and Queen Elizabeth National Parks
Canoe fees at Mabamba Swamp (Shoebill)

Price excludes:

International/domestic flights (to/from Entebbe)
Visas
Items of a personal nature, e.g. gifts, laundry, internet access, phone calls, etc. Any pre- or post-tour accommodation, meals, or birding excursions
Soft/alcoholic drinks
Personal travel insurance
Gratuities (please see our [tipping guidelines blog](#))
Optional Gorilla tracking permit (\$800 currently)
Optional Chimpanzee tracking permit (\$250 currently)