

GISHWATI-MUKURA

NATIONAL PARK GUIDEBOOK





ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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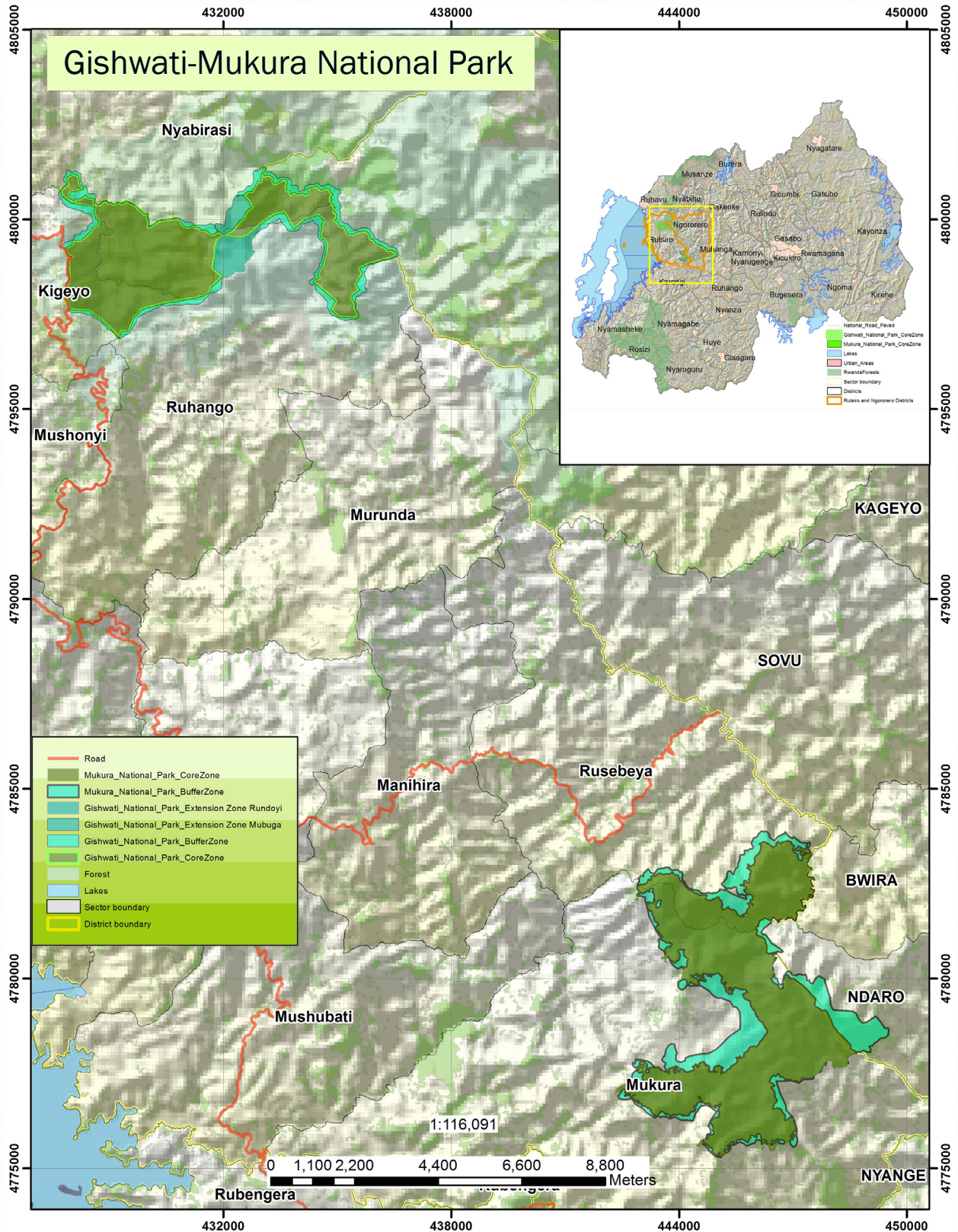
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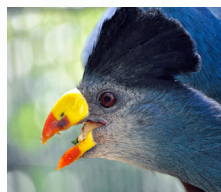
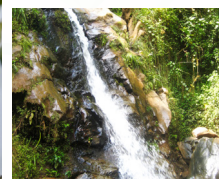
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Note: This map displays the two sections of Gishwati-Mukura National Park: Gishwati Forest in the north, and Mukura Forest in the south. This template was adapted from Google Earth.

ABOUT GISHWATI-MUKURA NATIONAL PARK



Gishwati-Mukura National Park Quick Facts

- Location: Rutsiro and Ngororero Districts, Northwestern Rwanda
- Nearest towns: Rubavu and Karongi
- Coordinates: 1° 49' S, 29° 22' E
- Altitude: 2000 – 3000 m
- Area: 35.58 km² (Gishwati: 15.70 km²; Mukura: 19.88 km²)
- Annual rainfall: 1200 – 1500 mm
- Established as a National Park: February 2016
- Key attractions: Chimpanzees, monkeys, birds, waterfalls, mountainous, natural forest, community-based activities
- Managing entity: Rwanda Development Board (RDB) – www.rdb.rw

Gishwati-Mukura National Park (GMNP) expands across 35.58 km² in Rutsiro and Ngororero districts of Rwanda's Western Province. Its hilly landscape gives wonderful and expansive views. The park is one of the few remaining natural forests and biodiversity hotspots in the Congo-Nile Divide within the Albertine Rift region. Its biodiversity includes eastern chimpanzee, mountain and golden monkey, serval, genet, civet, small mammals, amphibians, reptiles, more than 120 species of birds and more than 250 plant species.

The two forests, Gishwati and Mukura, have known a long period of degradation due to human encroachment, most significantly Gishwati Forest. For instance, from its original size of 700 km² in

1930s the core forest of Gishwati was reduced only to 6 km² in 2002.

Thanks to collaborative conservation efforts, Gishwati Forest now expands on about 15.70 km². Furthermore, in February 2016, the Government of Rwanda upgraded the conservation effort of Mukura and Gishwati forests from Forest Reserves to a National Park.

Visiting Gishwati-Mukura National Park is an opportunity to explore its biodiversity, meet local communities and enjoy hiking and biking various trails in and around the park.

KEY INFORMATION

GETTING THERE

Depending on the departure point, the park can be reached by road using both public and private transport. From Kigali, regular buses depart from Nyabugogo Bus Station to Rubavu (Gisenyi town) (3hrs) via the road NR2 or to Karongi (2hrs) via NR1. From Rubavu or Karongi towns, the Kivu Belt road (NR11) that connects Goma-Rubavu-Karongi-Rusizi and Bukavu towns leads to the Gishwati-Mukura National Park. Moreover, from any of those towns, visitors can use boat services available on Kivu Lake and meet hired cars to reach the park.



Photos: @FHA and Living in Kigali

Useful contacts

Rwanda Development Board
Tel: +250 252 502 350/573 396 (Kigali)
Email: reservation@rwandatourism.com

Suitable visiting seasons and weather

Being a mountainous country close to the equator, Rwanda enjoys a cool and sunny tropical climate and so the park can be visited any time of the year. Clothing should be adapted to seasons: Light clothes in the warm dry season, and rain-proof clothes during the rainy seasons spanning from October to December and from March to May.

Accommodation

There are two possibilities for accommodation around the park. For adventurers, homestay, farmstay, and low cost secure camping sites are available around the park. The three base camps are located at Kinkanda, Satinski Village and Gatenga. In the Gishwati area, researchers can stay at Sunshine Gishwati Research Center. There are also various hotels in the nearest towns of Rubavu and Karongi.

Visit www.rwandatourism.com for more information.

Banking services and currency

The nearby towns of Rubavu and Karongi have a number of bank branches, which are open from 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. on weekdays. ATM machines accept VISA, Mastercard and American Express cards for cash withdrawal 24h/day. Rwandan Francs (Rwf) is the main accepted currency for payment of services. US dollars, Euro and Pound can be exchanged at any Forex Bureau. Hotels accept payment in US dollars.

Shopping

As souvenirs, beautiful handicrafts and local art products are available at the park reception centre, Community Exhibition Centre, and at nearby shops. Other markets and restaurants are located in nearby towns and provide the best opportunity to experience African and Rwandan art and taste the local flavours.

Health and safety

During the visit, your guide will carry a first aid kit to provide basic first aid in the event of any medical emergencies. The guide will also have a radio and cell phone to contact support staff based at the reception centre. Please inform your guide ahead of time if you have any medical conditions that he/she should know about. A helicopter is ready for any emergency.

Please note that it is not permitted to visit the park if you have diarrhoea, fever, coughing, sneezing, cold sores (herpes outbreak), and a sore throat, or if you have been exposed to known communicable diseases within the 48 hours prior to arriving at the park. Let the guide know if you are feeling sick before the tour begins.

Fees, visa and language

- **Fees:** Visit www.rdb.rw for up to date fee information.

- **Visa:** Visa processing is easy, cheap and quick in Rwanda, and can even be done online. Citizens from all countries can get a 30-day entry visa upon arrival without prior application. For EAC visitors, valid IDs are sufficient to enter Rwanda. For more information, please contact the Rwandan embassy in your country or visit www.migration.gov.rw.

- **Official languages:** Kinyarwanda, English, French and Swahili.

GMNP can be visited all the days during business hours. Visitors may choose from a menu of products that mainly includes guided forest hike, tracking primates and exploring various community-based projects and activities.

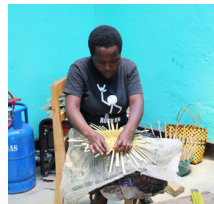
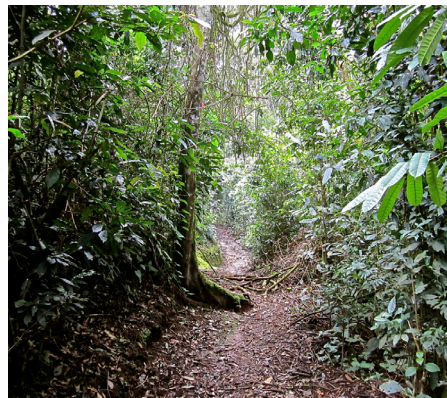


Handicraft products ©Karim

PARK ACTIVITIES

INSIDE THE PARK

Gishwati-Mukura National Park can be visited every day of the year. Visitors can enjoy a range of experiences including guided forest hikes, tracking primates and exploring various community-based projects and activities.



Photos: @FHA and Karim

Guided nature hike

This is an insightful walk inside the park along the trails that enter less disturbed forest, darker, and more humid areas. A trained guide accompanies a group of eight people maximum. Along the trail, you experience many large, often flowering trees, vines, giant earthworms, flashing birds, giant tree ferns and amazing waterfalls. Charming chameleons, golden and mountain monkeys and even chimpanzees might be encountered. Night walks are also organised as some animals are nocturnal.

Guided chimpanzee and monkey tracking

Primates provide a joyful experience. As a visitor, you will learn about their whole life in the wilderness, either on the ground walking or in the branches of trees resting, jumping and even feeding.

Bird watching

The park offers exciting opportunities to watch a wide variety of Albertine Rift endemic bird species coupled with the hilly terrain, which allows for good views of the forest canopy. With over 126 bird species, the park is a “Great Birders Destination”. You will be provided with bird watching trails, and signage, maps and brochures.

COMMUNITY-BASED ACTIVITIES AROUND THE PARK

Cattle rearing and farm stay

Tourists may discover different cattle rearing related activities and traditions such as caring for cows, milking, and milk treatment and preservation.

Cultural dance

Near the Gishwati area of the park lives an indigenous community of historically marginalised people. Their cultural group named “Indashyikirwa” (champions) performs a local dance that’s sure to get you on your feet.

Experience traditional medicine

Don’t miss the chance to learn how traditional healers use natural plants to support the 21st century medicine. Visiting cooperatives of traditional healers is a great way to experience traditional Rwandan medicine. The members lead you on forest walks of one to two hours to see medicinal plants, and later in their homes to see the finished medicines and learn about their uses. The guides ensure mutually respectful conversations.

Handicraft making and beekeeping

In the park area, there are various local cooperatives worth visiting such as UNICOAPIGI for bee-keeping and honey processing, and COOVAKARU for handcrafts. Visitors meet cooperative members and learn about their contribution to park conservation. It is an occasion to purchase natural honey, baskets, traditional mats and dung art, and colourful handbags. Your guide will facilitate interactions during the one to two hour visit.

Sightseeing and visiting tea plantations

Journey into nearby tea plantations to interact with farmers and satisfy your curiosity on the process of tea planting, tending and harvesting. The plantations stretch for hundreds of hectares in the hills around the park offering wonderful views of these spectacular landscapes.

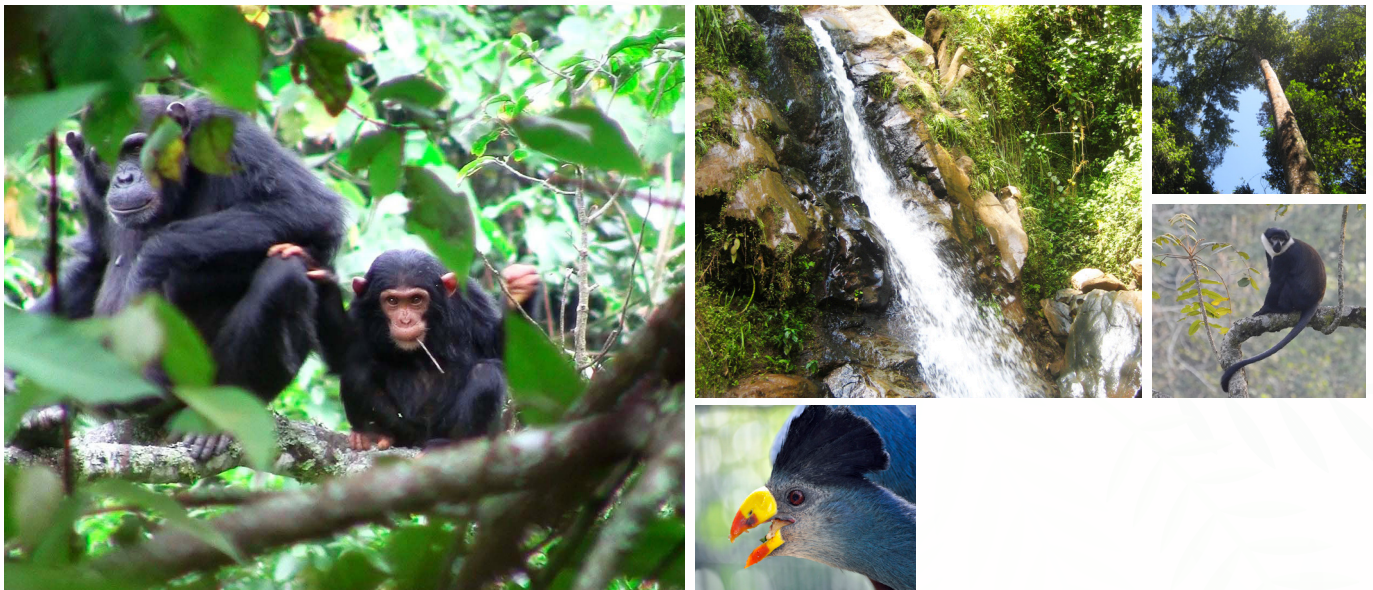
Visiting protocols

- Hiking starts at 7:00 am.
- Chimpanzees and monkeys are visited from 7:00 to 10:00 a.m
- There are no time and number of restrictions during the day for bird watching and community-based tourism.
- Visiting in groups is allowed, but some activities require that large groups be divided into smaller groups to allow friendly and insightful learning experiences between visitors and the forest guides. A group of eight people maximum is suitable for hiking, biking, visiting chimpanzees, monkeys and the waterfalls.

PARK ATTRACTIONS

INSIDE AND AROUND THE PARK

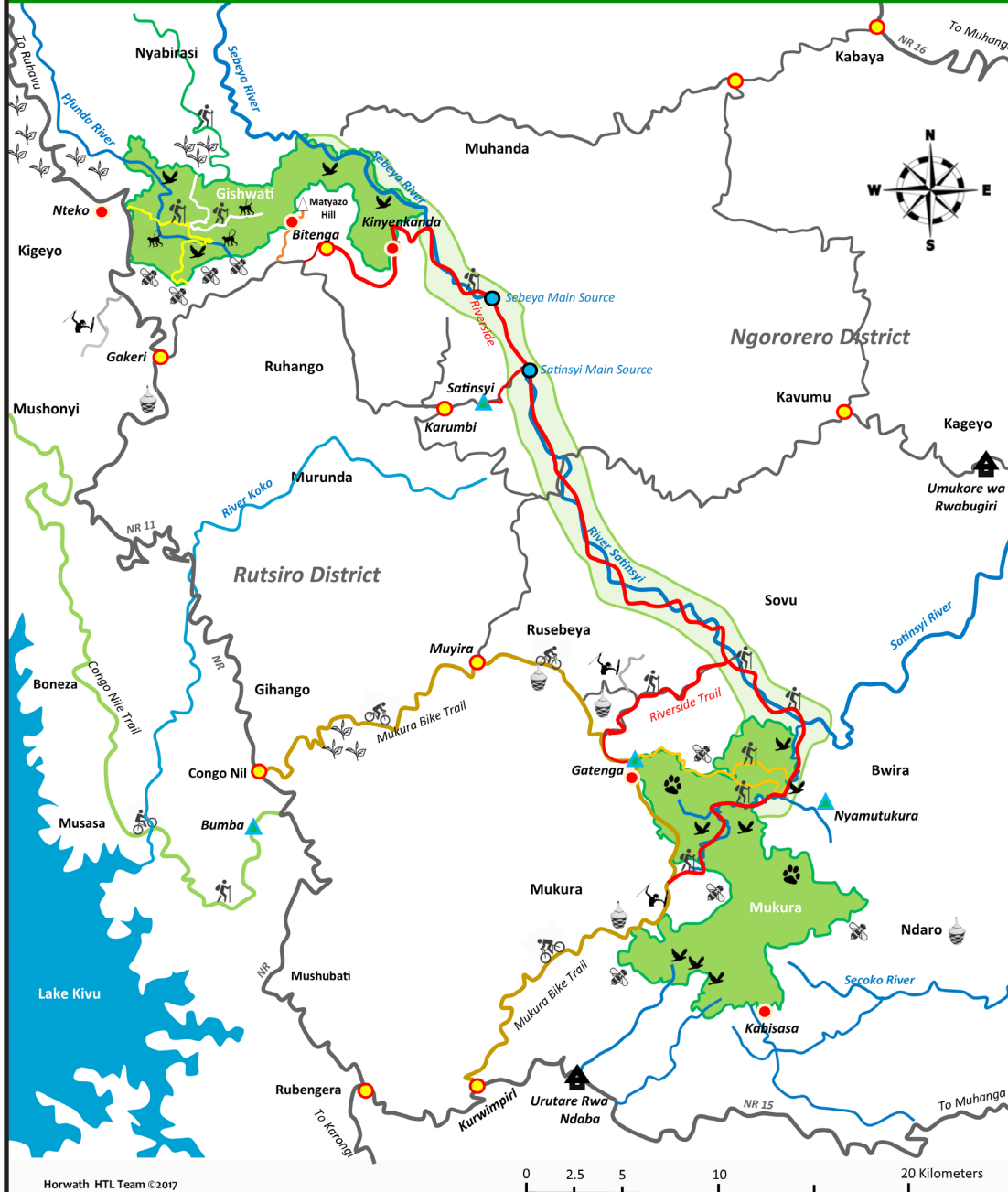
Gishwati-Mukura National Park is home to a range of primates, colourful birds, and shy nocturnal mammals. Spectacular trees, rushing waterfalls, and lush forest form a beautiful and unique environment. Stunning tea-planted hills as far as the eye can see and local community experiences are just a few of the park's attractions worth exploring.



Photos: @FHA and Chris Roche

KEY ATTRACTIONS	LOCATION	ACTIVITY
Wildlife		
Key primates: Eastern chimpanzee and monkeys	Gishwati Forest	Tracking
Other animals: serval, genet, African civet, side-striped jackal, Ruwenzori sun squirrel, frogs, Great Lakes bush viper, Chameleons, skinks, giant earth worm	Gishwati and Mukura forests	Wildlife exploration
Birds: Sunbirds, Turacos, Handsome Francolin, Martial Eagle, Grey-crowned Crane, and more.	Gishwati and Mukura forests	Birding
Flora: <i>Carapa grandiflora</i> “Umushwati”, <i>Symphonia globulifera</i> “Umushishi”, Giant tree fern “Igishigishigi”	Gishwati and Mukura forests	Wildlife exploration
Trails		
Riverside trail	Corridor from Gishwati to Mukura	Community-based tourism, nature hike, camping and birding
Waterfall trail (Kazeneza), Umushwati and Matyazo hill trails	Gishwati Forest	Hiking and biking
Rushubi tea trail	Gishwati Forest area	Biking, nature exploration and community-based tourism
Mukura bike trail	Mukura Forest	Biking & hiking
Rucanzogera trail	Mukura Forest	Hiking, wildlife exploration and birding
Community trails	Gishwati and Mukura forest areas	Community-based tourism
Waterfalls		
Pfunda and Sebeya rivers	Gishwati	Hiking and wildlife exploration
Satinsyi, Rucanzogera and Secoko rivers	Mukura	
Community-based tourisms		
Pastoralism, traditional medicine, handicrafts, beekeeping and honey processing, traditional dance, tea plantation and production	Park area	Hiking, learning, exploring and shopping local products

GMNP Attraction Map



Horwath HTL Team ©2017

Legend

	Main Road		River Type 1		Primates Trekking
	Untarred Road		River Type 2		Birding
	Congo Nile Trail		Forest		Wildlife
	Mukura Bike Trail		Lake Kivu		Bird Watching
	Riverside Trail		Connecting Corridor		Bee Keeping
	Rucanzogera Trail		Ranger Post		Tea Tour
	Waterfall Trail		Base Camp		Nature Hike
	Umushwati Trail		River Source		Mountain Biking
	Matyazo Trail		Road Junction		Cultural/Traditional Dance
	Rushubi Tea Trail		Historical site		Hand Craft
	Community Trails				

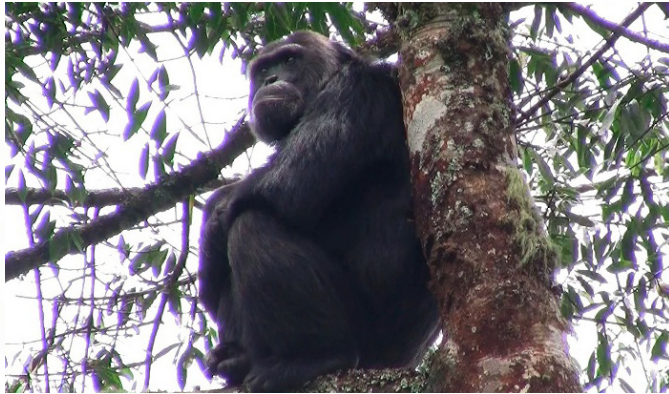
KEY PRIMATES

Chimpanzees, Golden monkeys and Mountain monkeys are the three primates found in the park, and are some of the most unique and attractive animals you can spot in the forest.

Eastern chimpanzee

(Pan troglodytes schweinfurthii, Impundu)

More than 25 eastern chimpanzees are recorded in the park. Adults may weigh between 40 and 65 kg. Males are taller than females at 160 cm and 130 cm respectively. They are recognised by their vocalisations which carry far. They can be heard hooting with excitement as they discover a *Myrianthus* tree filled with fruit or if males find that a female is sexually receptive.



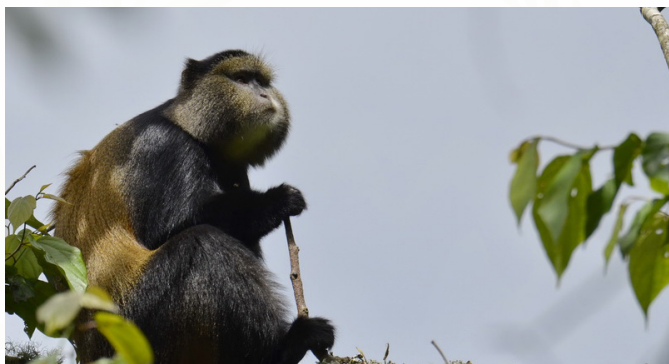
Eastern chimpanzee ©FHA

Chimpanzees are messy eaters. As you walk through the forest you might discover a chimpanzee “feeding site” on the trail. Although they may feed on *Pennisetum* grasses, the pith of giant tree ferns or the bark of *Dombeya* tree, chimps particularly like figs and the fruits of the *Myrianthus*. They also occasionally eat honey and animal protein. You might even find sticks next to the ground bee nests that appear to have been used to probe into the nests.

Golden monkey

(Cercopithecus mitis kandti, Inkima)

Golden monkeys get their name from a distinctive yellow-gold back. They weigh between 3.5 to 7 kg and range from 45 to 70 cm in height. In Rwanda, they are frequently found in the Volcanoes and Gishwati-Mukura national parks. They are an endangered subspecies on the IUCN Red List. Individuals live in large groups and each group is always guided by a dominant male.



Golden monkey ©Chris Roche

More than 18 different groups of Golden monkeys are found in Gishwati Forest accounting for a total number of more than 100 individuals. They are scattered throughout the forest, but are mostly concentrated in the north-eastern part in their preferred bamboo habitat. The adult males spend more time feeding and resting than other age and sex categories. The adult females devote more time to moving than others. Juveniles are frequently seen playing. Their opportunistic activities include aggression, copulation and vocalisation with the dominant “Pyow” call only made by adult males.

Mountain monkeys

(Cercopithecus l'hoesti, Inkende)

Mountain monkeys live in social groups and can sometimes be seen together with Golden monkeys.



Mountain monkey ©Chris Roche

The park is home to more than 13 groups of Mountain monkeys with a total number of more than 150 individuals.

Also known as “L’hoesti monkey”, the Mountain monkey possesses a brilliant white ruff that frames its delicate black face. Its second most striking feature is deep-set, orange eyes, surrounded by a bare skin that is pale violet in adult males. The body and long legs are black with grizzled grey, except for a chestnut coloured saddle. The long tail is thick at the base and tapers to a black brush. Mountain monkeys are semi-terrestrial guenons. Individuals are observed across the park, but they are more present in the western part of Gishwati Forest. They eat fruit and leaves of about 16 plant species with *Dombeya goetzenii* being the most frequently consumed.

OTHER WILD SPECIES

Side-striped jackal

(*Canis adustus*, *Ingunzu/Nyiramuhali*)

The side-striped jackal is a dog-like social predator that is primarily nocturnal and weighs between 7 and 12 kg. They are omnivores and eat fallen fruit, small mammals, the remains of dead animals, terrestrial birds such as the Handsome francolins and their eggs.



Side-striped jackal ©Karim

Serval (*Leptailurus serval*, *Imondo*)

The serval is a small cat that can weigh between 13 and 18 kg. Typically found in grasslands, servals have very long legs, a long neck and large ears that give them acute hearing. Although mainly nocturnal throughout their range, you may be lucky enough to see a serval during the day.



Serval ©FHA

Ruwenzori sun squirrel

(*Heliosciurus ruwenzorii*, *Agatinyi*)

Endemic to the Albertine Rift, the Ruwenzori sun squirrel is found in montane forests above 1600 m of altitude. Though arboreal, it feeds near the ground.



Ruwenzori sun squirrel ©iNaturalist 2017

Servaline Genet

(*Genetta servalina*, *Urutoni*)

The servaline genet is the only species of genet observed in Gishwati-Mukura National Park. Its body fur has black spots on the neck, back and sides, and it has a long tail banded with wide black and narrow white rings.



Servaline genet ©CSIC

African civet

(*Civettictis civetta*, *Impimbi*)

A solitary mammal with a unique body coloration characterised by black and white stripes, the African civet is omnivorous and prefers riverine habitats and woodlands.



African civet ©Nick Gordon

Amphibians

The forest frogs (*Platymantis* sp, *Igikeri*) along with multiple species of toads are some of the park's amphibians.



African clawed frog ©2017 Thinklink

Reptiles

In the family of reptiles, the park hosts the great lakes bush viper (*Atheris nitschei*, *Impiri*), multiple species of chameleons including the Ruwenzori three-horned chameleon (*Chamaeleo johnstoni*, *Uruvu*) and skinks such as African striped skink (*Trachylepsis striata*, *Umuserebanya*).



Great lake bush viper ©Jgdb 500



Three-horned chameleon ©Emmanuel Van Heygen



African striped ©Stephen Zozaya 2014

Invertebrates

The park hosts invertebrates including many species of insects. As you walk in the wet areas of the forest, you can also encounter the giant earthworm (*Dichogaster* sp, *Umuhovu*) measuring more than 30 cm in length.



Giant earthworm ©FHA

KEY BIRDS

More than 126 bird species live in the park. Approximately 14 species are of special conservation significance because they are endemic to the Albertine Rift. The Purple-breasted sunbird represents the highest population density. Large birds found in the forest include turacos, cranes and eagles.

Sunbirds (*Umununi*)

The sunbirds are small (weighing 5 to 45 g), slender passerines with a down-curved bill adapted for feeding on nectar. Many species have long tail feathers. They are strongly sexually dimorphic with the males being larger and having brilliant plumage and long tails. Three species are frequently observed: Regal sunbird (*Cinnyris regius*), Blue-headed sunbird (*Cyanomitra alinae*) and Purple-breasted sunbird (*Nectarinia purpureiventris*).



Purple-breasted sunbird ©Rhys Marsh



Regal sunbird ©Rhys Marsh



Blue-headed sunbird ©Dr M. Zieger

Turacos

Two species of turaco are seen in the park: The Great blue turaco (*Corythaeola cristata*) and the Ruwenzori turaco (*Gallirex johnstoni*).



Great blue turaco ©Lawrence Neo

Great blue turaco

(*Corythaeola cristata*, Inganji)

The Great blue turaco is the largest species of turaco measuring 70 to 76 cm long with a mass of 800 to 1,230 g.



Great blue turaco ©Lawrence Neo

Ruwenzori turaco

(*Gallirex johnstoni*, *Intuku*)

The Ruwenzori turaco is about 45 cm long, can weigh 210-260 g and prefers feeding on fruit.



Ruwenzori turaco ©Marc Lilje

Handsome francolin

(*Pternistis nobilis*, *Inkware*)

The handsome francolin is a large, up to 35 cm long, ground-dwelling forest bird with dark reddish-brown plumage, and a red bill and legs. Both sexes are similar in appearance. This bird is primarily a seedeater preferring montane bamboo and patchy habitats. In the past, the bird supplemented the diet of people living around the park.



Handsome francolin ©Jason Anderson

Martial Eagle

(*Polemaetus bellicosus*, *Kagoma*)

The martial eagle is a large, booted eagle having feathers over its tarsus. Its total length is 85 cm on average, with a wingspan ranging from 180 to 260 cm. They are highly sexually dimorphic, with females being larger than males. Males can weigh from 2.2 to 3.8 kg whereas females can weigh from 4.5 to 6.5 kg. Martial eagles are opportunistic predators that vary their prey selection between mammals, birds and reptiles.



Martial eagle ©2017-2012 DinoAnimals

Grey-crowned crane

(*Balearica regulorum*, *Umusambi*)

The Grey-crowned crane is about 1 m tall and weighs about 3.5 kg. The body plumage is mainly grey with the head bearing a crown of stiff golden feathers. Sexes are similar although males tend to be slightly larger. It can roost in trees.



Grey-crowned crane ©Chrumps

Sightings checklist

During your visit, tick off the species in Gishwati-Mukura National Park that you identify. Record other species that you spot which are not listed in the table below.

PRIMATES				ALBERTINE RIFT ENDEMIC BIRDS			
Eastern chimpanzee <i>Pan troglodytes schweinfurthii</i>				Handsome Francolin, <i>Pternistis nobilis</i>			
Golden monkey <i>Cercopithecus mitis kandti</i>				Ruwenzori Turaco, <i>Gallirex johnstoni</i>			
Mountain monkeys <i>Cercopithecus l'hoesti</i>				Ruwenzori Batis, <i>Batisdiops</i>			
Mammals				Mountain Sooty Boubou, <i>Laniarius holomelas</i>			
Serval <i>Leptailurus serval</i>				Stripe-breasted Tit, <i>Parus fasciiventer</i>			
Servaline Genet, <i>Genetta servalina</i>				Red-faced Woodland Warbler, <i>Phylloscopus laetus</i>			
African civet, <i>Civettictis civetta</i>				Ruwenzori Apalis, <i>Oreolais ruwenzorii</i>			
Side-striped jackal, <i>Canis adustus</i>				Mountain Masked Apalis, <i>Apalis personate</i>			
Ruwenzori sun squirrel <i>Heliosciurus ruwenzorii</i>				Kivu Ground Thrush, <i>Zoothera tanganjicae</i>			
Amphibians				Archer's Ground Robin, <i>Des-sonornis archeri</i>			
Forest frogs, <i>Platymantis</i>				Red-throated Alethe, <i>Pseudaethep oliophrys</i>			
Annelids				Blue-headed Sunbird, <i>Cy-anomitra alinae</i>			
Giant earth worm, <i>Dichogaster sp.</i>				Purple-breasted Sunbird, <i>Nec-tarinia purpureiventris</i>			
Reptiles				Regal Sunbird, <i>Cinnyris regius</i>			
Great Lakes bush viper, <i>Atheris nitschei</i> ,				Ruwenzori Double-collared Sunbird, <i>Cinnyris stuhlmanni</i>			
Three-horned chameleon, <i>Chamaeleo johnstoni</i>				Strange Weaver, <i>Ploceus alienus</i>			
African striped skink, <i>Trachylep-sis striata</i>				Dusky Crimsonwing, <i>Cryptospiza jacksoni</i>			



Record below the identified species not mentioned in the table above

Flora

The Gishwati-Mukura National Park flora consists of ombrophylous montane forest that gives a colourful view due to differing vegetation types: the mixed forest, bamboo forest, swamp forest and grassland.

There is a variety of tree species such as *Harungana montana*, *Prunus africana*, *Potocarpus latifolius* and *Polyscias fulva*; *Macaranga kilimandscharica*, *Carapa grandiflora*, *Entandrophragma excelsum*, *Hagenia abyssinica*, *Dracena afromontana*, *Symphonia globulifera* and the charismatic giant tree ferns (*Cyathea manniana*). *Carapa grandiflora*, *Symphonia globulifera* and the giant tree ferns (*Cyathea manniana*) attract attention due to their predominance and ecological functions.

Carapa grandiflora (Umushwati)

This is one of the most common trees found in Gishwati after which the forest was named. Fruits can weigh up to 800 g in average, and each fruit contains about 10 seeds. Freshly fallen fruits have fibrous indehiscent husks that are green with red coloration on the ridges, turning brown after several days. The fruit of this tree has seeds that scatter everywhere, contributing to the expansion of the tree in the forest. *Carapa grandiflora* is typically 20-30 m in height. Flowering peaks arrive between May and September with fruits typically produced in July to September.



Carapa grandiflora ©FHA

Symphonia globulifera (Umushishi)

Its canopy provides an environment where many animals live, especially chimpanzees and purple-breasted sunbirds. Chimpanzees may make their nests in the branches of *Symphonia*, and also eat both its flowers and fruits. *Symphonia* rises up to between 30 and 40 m. Its fruit are oval-shaped and green or crimson when young but turn brown later. It remains by far one of the most dominant large and tall trees in Gishwati because it was not attractive to the woodcutters who eliminated most of the original trees from Gishwati over the past few decades. Its wood exudes a sticky yellow latex, which makes it unsuitable for lumber and charcoal production.



Symphonia globulifera ©FHA

Giant tree fern (*Igishigishigi*)

They occur in shallow and wet areas. They tower over a normal person and represent one of the world's oldest plant lineages.



Giant tree fern ©FHA

Trails and waterfalls

Trails and waterfalls are among the most attractive features of Gishwati-Mukura National Park. Along the trails, tourists can enjoy hiking, biking, birding, as well as nature, wildlife and local community experiences. These attractions are clearly identified in the three main tourism zones (see maps below):

- Umushwati Tourism Zone includes the western zone of Gishwati Forest and its buffer zone, the Umushwati Trail, the Pfunda River waterfalls, and the Rushubi tea trail.
- Bitenga/Sebeya Tourism Zone includes the eastern part of Gishwati Forest, the Matyazo Hill trail, the Kinyenkanda Ranger Post and the Sebeya riverside trail starting point.
- Rucanzogera Tourism Zone includes the northern part of Mukura Forest and its buffer zone, the Rucanzogera Trail, the Mukura/Congo Nile mountain bike trail linking Mukura Forest to Lake Kivu, and Mukura community trail.

Waterfalls are located on the Pfunda, Sebeya, Satinyi, Rucanzogera and Secoko rivers. For example, Pfunda River drops over a series of sloping rock ledges and boulders in the heart of Gishwati Forest from southeast to northwest. It features the beautiful Kazeneza falls named after the local language word for “Welcome”.

There are numerous trails inside and around the park. The Riverside Trail is the most important as it links the two patches of the park, Gishwati and Mukura forests. It goes along Sebeya River in the Gishwati area and connects to Satinyi River in the Mukura area, stretching along the Congo Nile watershed.

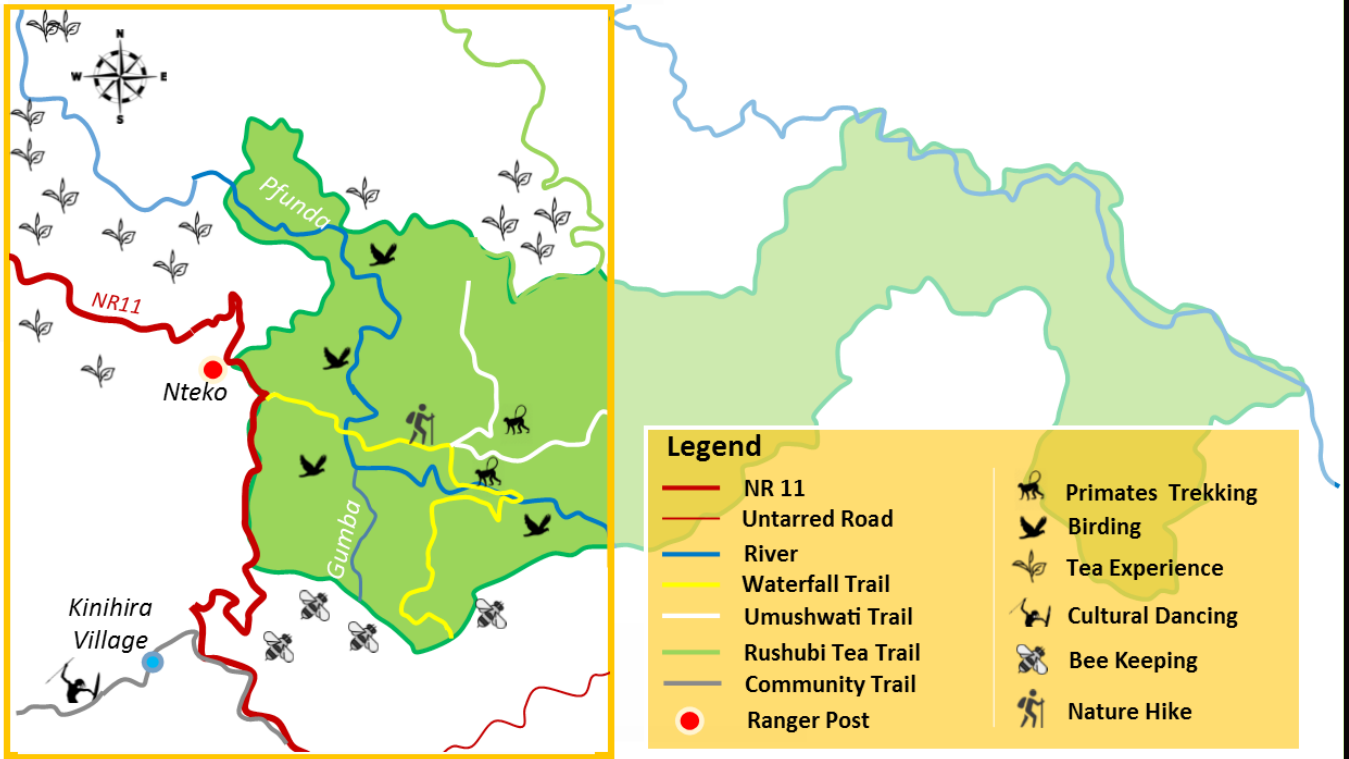


Kazeneza Falls ©FHA

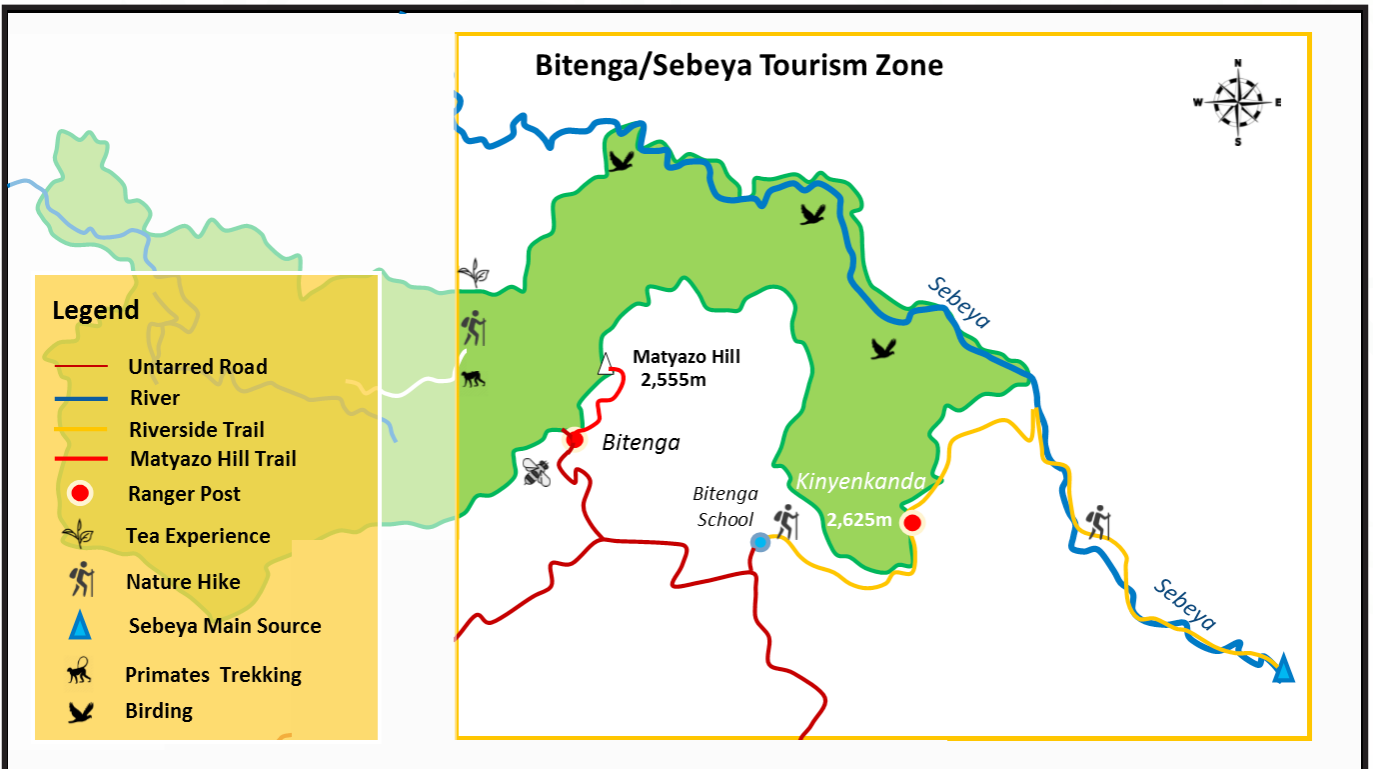
Trail details

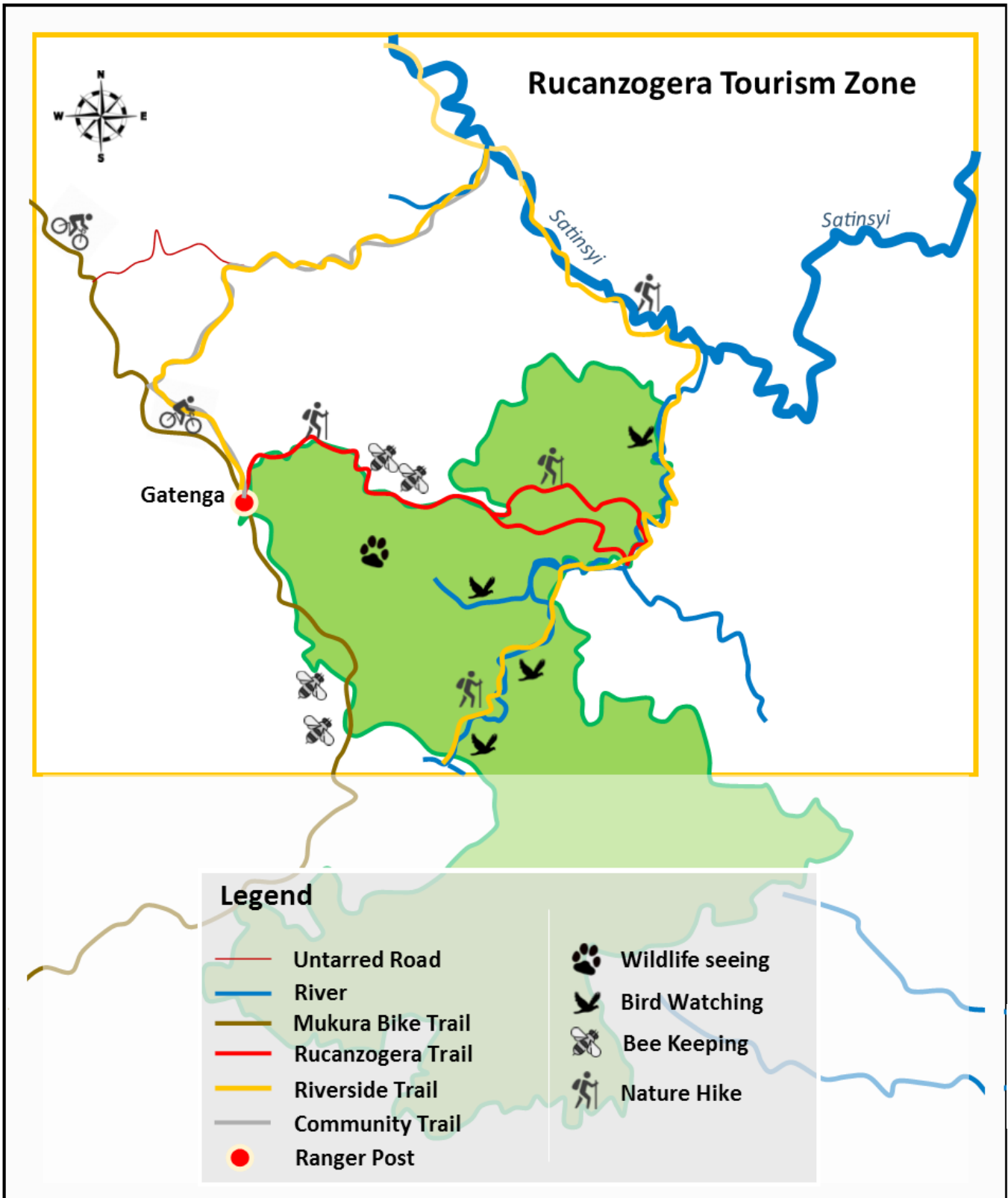
Name of the trail	Accessible from	Length	Elevation	Loop	Easy
Waterfall Trail	Kivu Belt Road and Nteko Ranger Post	7 km	2,229 m	Loop	Easy
Nteko Ranger Post	7 km	2,229 m	Loop	Easy	Moderate
Umushwati Trail	Waterfall trail inside Gishwati forest and Bitenga Ranger Post	8 km	2,337 m	Out and back	Moderate
Rushubi Tea Trail	Mahoko Junction	24 km	2,372 m	Out and back	Moderate
Gishwati Community Trail	Kinihira Village	One-day hike	2,578 m	-	Easy
Matyazo Hill Trail	Waterfall and Umushwati trails and Bitenga Ranger Post	3 km	2,469 m	Out and back	Moderate
Mukura Bike Trail	Congo-Nil centre junction and Kurwimpiri Junction	50 km	2,554 m	Out and back	Moderate
Rucanzogera Trail	Gatenga Village & Mukura Center	3-6 hrs hike	2,398 m	Out and back	Moderate
Riverside Trail	Congo-Nil road at Muyira and Karumbi Villages and Kageyo	30 km	2,665 m	Out and back	Easy
Mukura Community Trail	Riverside Trail	Half day hike	2408 m	-	Easy

Umushwati Tourism Zone



Bitenga/Sebeya Tourism Zone





COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM

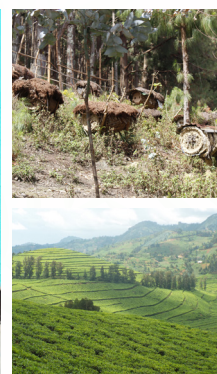
There are a variety of local community experiences and projects that can make your visit to Gishwati-Mukura National Park a special one. They include: traditional medicine, handcraft, bee keeping, cattle rearing and farm stay, homestay, traditional dance and camping. These experiences are offered by those living around the park, residents who contribute much to conservation through the framework of the Community Partnership Programme.



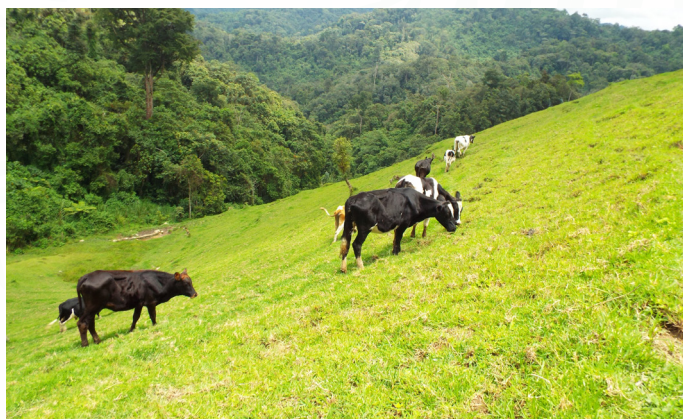
Traditional dance by Indashyikirwa



Handicraft



Tea plantation



Cattle rearing in the Gishwati area



Traditional healers

Photos: @FHA and Karim

Community-based activities

ACTIVITY	COOPERATIVE/ GROUP	PARK AREA	CONTACTS
Traditional medicine	KOAGIRU	Gishwati	0785731640
	Mukura Traditional Healers Association	Mukura	0786772443
Handicrafts	COOVAKARU	Gishwati	0782975760
	Duce Amasashe	Mukura	0788965737
	Women Association	Mukura	0784976090
	COABU	Mukura	0784939498
Bee keeping	UNICOAPIGI	Gishwati	0788804604
	TUZAMURANE Ndaro	Mukura	0782975760
	COARABERU Rusebeya	Mukura	0785305299
Traditional dance	INDASHYIKIRWA	Gishwati	0783491512
	Women Traditional Dancers Group	Mukura	0784976090
Cattle rearing	Jyambere	Gishwati	0788593558
Tea production	Rutsiro Tea Growers Co-operatives Union	Gishwati	0788744316, 0783520865

BEYOND GISHWATI-MUKURA NATIONAL PARK

Visitors to Gishwati-Mukura National Park have the opportunity to visit historic sites around the park such as the Umukore wa Rwabugiri, a historic site in Ngororero District, the Urutare rwa Ndaba, a historic site in Karongi District and the Matyazo historic site in Rutsiro District. Beyond these attractions, tourists can relax on the shores of Lake Kivu, visit the Bralirwa brewery, and explore the Kivu Belt Road (National Road 11) and the Congo-Nile Trail (see details in the table below).



Lake Kivu



Kivu Belt Road



Congo-Nile Trail



Congo-Nile Trail



Potato plantation



Bralirwa brewery office in Rubavu

Photos: @FHA, Living in Kigali and Rwanda Broadcasting Agency

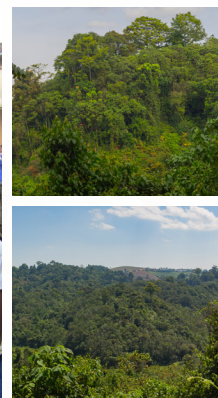
Activities around the park

Destination	Brief description	More information
Lake Kivu	Only a 30-minute drive from Gishwati, relax and refresh on beautiful sandy beaches, enjoy a boat trip to visit towns along Kivu shores of Rubavu, Karongi, Rusizi, Goma and Bukavu.	www.rwandatourism.com www.rdb.rw
Kivu Belt Road (Road 11)	Through Gishwati Forest, enjoy 3 - 4 hours drive and explore hills, mountains, rural settlements and lifestyle.	www.mininfra.gov.rw
Bralirwa	The main and oldest brewery in Rwanda located in Rubavu.	www.bralirwa.com
Congo-Nile Trail	227 km (141 miles) of a lovely landscape trail alongside the Lake Kivu extending from Rubavu, through Rutsiro via Karongi and Nyamasheke districts to Rusizi District.	www.rwandatourism.com



CONSERVATION HISTORY OF GISHWATI AND MUKURA FORESTS

The two patches of Gishwati and Mukura were formerly part of a complex system of rainforests through the middle of Africa. This system extended west beyond Lake Kivu connecting with the rainforests of the Congo, the Volcanoes National Park in Rwanda, and in the south connecting with Nyungwe National Park and Cyamudongo Forest in Rwanda, and the contiguous Kibira National Park in Burundi. This forest complex system has been fragmented due to population increase and deforestation. The creation of Gishwati and Mukura forests as a national park was done to ensure their sustainable protection and regeneration. Each patch of the park has its long history, especially Gishwati Forest.



Photos: @FHA and Fabian Hass

Gishwati Natural Forest



Gishwati Forest ©HandZaround-Rwanda

Gishwati was established as a natural reserve in 1930 and covered about 70,000 ha. It was gradually depleted to 28,000 ha in 1960, to 8,800 ha in 1990 and to 600 ha in 2002. The establishment of the forestry industry alongside cattle ranching in 1980s led to the conversion of 70% of the forest. By the 1990s it had been further depleted to about 61.7 % of this size because of human encroachment, large-scale cattle ranching, cattle grazing within the forest, resettlement of returnees after the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, and clearing of the forest for small-scale farming. Only 2% of what the forest was in 1970s was remaining in 2005. From 2006, restoration projects extended the forest up to 1,484 ha. The gazetted size of Gishwati Forest is 1,570 ha.

Changes in Gishwati Forest over time

YEAR	AREA (KM ²)
1930	700.00
1960	28.00
1980	23.00
1990	8.80
1996	3.80
2002	6.00
2008	8.86
2012	14.84
2016	15.70

The history of Gishwati Forest was reversed thanks to different government and non government initiatives. These include the Projet d'appui à la reforestation au Rwanda (PAFOR) (in 2006) of the former Ministry of Environment and Human Resettlement that increased the size of the forest from 600 ha to 886 ha. Gishwati Area Conservation Program (GACP) (2008-2012) followed and increased the size of the forest from 886 ha to about 1500 ha. The Landscape Approach to Forest Restoration and Conservation (LAFREC) project of the Rwanda Environment Management Authority (REMA) has been restoring the forest since 2014. As part of the national park, the forest is now under the mandate of the Rwanda Development Board (RDB). The Forest of Hope Association (FHA) has worked on the conservation of Gishwati Forest since 2012, mainly in the framework of the Community Forest Protection Initiative, environmental education, community development and research for wildlife monitoring.

Research enables the identification and mapping of fragile ecosystems, and the habitats of key species, to help understand the behavioural ecology of the primates and to reduce human-wildlife conflict. For details about research reports conducted so far visit: www.fharwanda.org.

Mukura Forest



Mukura Forest ©FHA

Like Gishwati, Mukura Forest was part of the forest complex in the western part of Rwanda extending from Volcanoes National Park in the north to Cyamudongo Forest in the south. It was gazetted as a reserve in 1951. The surface area decreased over time due to human encroachment through mining activities and deforestation for settlements. Currently, the gazetted surface area covers 1,988 ha whereas it was 3,000 ha in 1960s. Mukura Forest is also under restoration by the LAFREC project of REMA and under the governance of RDB as part of Gishwati-Mukura National Park.



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