

QUEEN ELIZABETH NATIONAL PARK

PARK AT A GLANCE

The 1978km2 Queen Elizabeth National Park is one of Uganda's oldest protected areas. Originally gazetted as the Lake George and Lake Edward game reserves in 1925, it was upgraded to create one of Uganda's first national parks in 1952.

Queen Elizabeth lies directly on the equator. A pair of concrete hoops marks the spot where the 00 line crosses the Kasese road.



The park is home to over 95 mammal species and over 600 bird species.

The park's highest point, 1,350m above sea level, is found in the Katwe Explosion Craters while the lowest point is 910m on the shore of Lake Edward.

Scenic and biodiverse, Queen Elizabeth National Park (QENP) is Uganda's most popular protected area. Diverse ecosystems, including sprawling savanna, shady forests, sparkling lakes and lush wetlands, provide ideal habitats for classic big game, forest primates, and birds.



An abundance of magnificent vistas include the jagged backdrop of the Rwenzori Mountains; rolling hills pocked with extinct volcanic craters; open, rift valley grasslands at Kasenyi and Ishasha; the hippo-lined Kazinga Channel; and the Mitumbe mountains in Congo rising above the distant, western shore of Lake Edward

Queen Elizabeth National Park and its surroundings are also of cultural and historical interest. There are many opportunities for visitors to meet the local communities and enjoy storytelling, dance, music and more. The park was initially named Kazinga National Park in 1952, but was renamed two years later to commemorate a visit by Queen Elizabeth II.

WILDLIFE

QENP's various habitats support a wealth of wildlife with more mammal species (95) than any other Ugandan park and over 600 bird species – a phenomenal number for such a small area. Expect to see safari favourites such as elephants, buffaloes and hippos. The chances of finding lions on the plains of Kasenyi and Ishasha are good, especially with a ranger guide, while leopard sightings are frequent, though unpredictable, around Mweya and the nearby Channel Track.



Classified as an Important Birding Area by Birding International, QENP is a superbly varied destination for birdwatchers with species representing the park's varied habitats. Its location at the overlap of East African savanna and Congo forest also means that species from both biomes are present.

LOCAL PEOPLE

Bunyaruguru people live on the Kichwamba Escarpment to the southeast of QENP. The area to the north of the park is the home of Basongora pastoralists while Bakonzo farmers cultivate the slopes of the Rwenzori mountain beyond.

ACCESS

Roads

Two routes run from Kampala to Mweya, the primary tourism hub in QENP. The most scenic route passes through Fort Portal (410km) and offers detours to Kibale, Semuliki and Rwenzori Mountains national parks. The alternative (420km) runs through Mbarara and Bushenyi and passes Lake Mburo National Park.

QENP's southerly Ishasha sector is directly on the main route to/from from Buhoma, the main mountain gorilla tracking trailhead in Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, which lies 62km south.

Air

Charter flights can be arranged to airstrips at Kasese, Mweya and Ishasha.

CLIMATE

Daytime temperatures average 18–280C. Nights can be cool.

WHEN TO VISIT

All year round

ACCOMMODATION

A range of accommodation in and around the park caters for up-market, mid range, budget and self-catering visitors. At Mweya, UWA offers 4–5 bedroom bungalows equipped with cooking facilities and utensils and affordable one–two bedroom cottages. Campsites are found at Mweya and Ishasha. Please visit the UWA website for more information.

Jacana Safari Lodge

An intimate mid budget lodge embedded in a rain forest at the edge of Uganda's largest Crater, Lake Nyamusingiri. It offers an exclusive eco tourism experience.

Ishasha Wilderness Camp

An ideal retreat for people who truly enjoy wilderness. Offers superb quality accommodation and services in this remotest sector of Queen Elizabeth National Park famous for its tree climbing lions.

ACTIVITIES AND ATTRACTIONS

Mweya peninsula and the kazinga channel

QENP's main tourism hub is found on Mweya Peninsula, 22km west of the Kasese-Mbarara Road. Mweya, which occupies an elevated plateau overlooking the Kazinga Channel and Lake Edward, is the site of an upmarket lodge; budget UWA run accommodation; a marina for launch trips on the channel; and a Visitor Information Centre. Activities are booked at the latter facility which also contains exhibits relating to the park and its rift valley setting.

Launch cruises



Launch trips on the Kazinga Channel provide the most relaxing way to view game in Queen Elizabeth National Park. The 2-hour return voyage between Mweya and the channel's entrance into Lake Edward cruises beside

banks lined with resident hippos, crocodiles and waterbirds and visiting elephant, buffalo and antelopes.

GAME DRIVES

Kasenyi plains

Half an hour's drive from Mweya, the open grasslands of Kasenyi provide the primary game viewing area in central QENP, thanks to the resident herds of Uganda kob and the lions that prey on them. Kasenyi's experienced ranger guides can usually locate lions but predator sightings can be guaranteed by signing up for a tour with the Mweya-based Uganda Predator Project which monitors the movement of lions, leopards and hyaenas fitted with radio collars.

Ishasha

Conveniently located on the road to Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, QENP's southernmost sector offers a classic game viewing experience under vast rift valley skies. Expect to see buffaloes, hippos, elephants topis and more besides. The chance of sighting lions is particularly good in Ishasha; the local prides obligingly spend their days resting up in the branches of shady fig trees.

FOREST WALKS

Kyambura Gorge

The forest-filled Kyambura Gorge extends from the Kichwamba Escarpment to the Kazinga Channel. Enjoy the giddy viewpoint on the edge of the 100m-deep chasm before descending into the depths to track chimpanzees with UWA guides.

Maramagambo Forest

At the foot of the Kichwamba Escarpment, the shady Maramagambo Forest contrasts with the park's open grasslands. Guided walks afford sightings of primates and rare birds (including the forest flycatcher, white-naped pigeon and the striking Rwenzori turaco) and visit Lake Nyamusingire (home to the African finfoot, this is formed by three connected crater lakes), the copper-rich Blue Lake and the Bat Cave with its resident bat-gorged python.

BIRDING

Birding activities overlap with the wildlife viewing locations described above. Highlights include easy

sightings of resident and migratory waterbirds on the Kazinga Channel; spectacular seasonal congregations of flamingoes on the Kyambura and Katwe soda lakes; careful searches for rare and restricted range forest



species in Maramagambo Forest; and memorable shoebill sightings on the remote Lake Edward Flats in Ishasha.

VOLCANIC EXPLOSION CRATERS

Crater Drive

Dozens of volcanic craters pock the landscape north of Mweya to remind us of the Albertine Rift's violent tectonic history. The 27km Crater Drive between the Kabatoro and Crater gates follows a breathtaking route around the rims of extinct craters filled, variously, with lakes, forest and grassland.

The Queen's Pavilion, at the Crater Gate on the eastern edge of the crater area, has been visited three times by British royalty. A small information centre and coffee shop stands on the site. The equator markers straddling the adjacent Kasese highway provide a popular photo opportunity.

Katwe Salt Lake

The people of Katwe town, 12km from Mweya, have been extracting salt from the saline Lake Katwe using

evaporation pans since the 14th century. Local guides will escort visitors down into the crater to see the process. The adjacent Lake Munyanyange is rich in waterbirds, including migrating lesser flamingo between August and November.

Kyambura Wildlife Reserve

This small reserve to the east of Kyambura Gorge is dotted with crater lakes that are visited, seasonally, by greater and lesser flamingoes.

TARIFFS & PAYMENT

For information on park entrance and activity fees, please refer to the UWA tariff sheet at www.ugandawildlife.org. Payments can be made using Uganda shillings, US dollars, British pounds, Euros and Visa. Twenty percent of all park fees are shared with communities in park boundary parishes to share the benefits of ecotourism and generate local support for conservation.

UWA has introduced a Wildlife Card system for prior payment of entrance and activity fees in QENP. Money is preloaded on a wildlife card at UWA HQ in Kampala or at QENP's Katunguru HQ and Queen's Pavilion Information Centre.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

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