Expedition Information

Uganda

The Great Primate Handshake

A primate conservation awareness expedition of Africa
The Great Primate Handshake: Uganda

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An introduction to the expedition’s objectives and the primate species you may encounter.

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Important information relevant to your expedition that will help you prepare.

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Important information

Overview

During your expedition you will be working to raise awareness of the threats Ugandan primates face to both local and international audiences.

The specific threats that primates face can vary according to country and species. The common denominator is often the role of man however; whether it’s a primate losing its home to deforestation, an orphan losing its mother to the bushmeat trade, or a primate being illegally sold as a pet.

From Great Apes to Bushbabies, the Great Primate Handshake aims to support all primates, with a current focus on African primates and the primate sanctuaries working to reverse their decline in the wild.

Uganda is considered one of the best primate hotspots in the world, and therefore it is no surprise that, from apes to prosimians, there are a large number of diurnal and nocturnal primate species in Uganda as well as Great Apes such as Gorillas and Chimpanzees.

Unfortunately, there is considerable disagreement of the taxonomic status of primate species and subspecies which makes the exact number of primates species in Uganda (and in many countries) hard to determine. However, current estimates are that there are 13 diurnal and 6 nocturnal species of primate in Uganda.

During the expedition we will be supporting the Ugandan Wildlife Education Centre and a nearby Jane Goodall Institute sanctuary - only accessible by speedboat, as its chimpanzee inhabitants are confined to the shores of a protected island in Lake Victoria.

We will also be visiting Kibale Forest to observe important eco-tourism projects, as well as visiting local schools, with an aim to researching and producing educational materials. Situated in Western Uganda, Kibale Forest is perhaps one of the most awe-inspiring and densely-packed parks in Uganda, as far as natural history goes. There are as many as 13 different species here and chimpanzees abound.

The most endangered species of Gorilla, the Mountain Gorilla, resides in the Virunga Mountains of Uganda (the Virunga National Park spreads over Uganda, Rwanda and DRC), Bwindi Impenetrable National Park and Mgahinga National Park. The Common Chimpanzee is also indigenous to Uganda, and listed as endangered. Within Uganda, it is found in most of the western forests.

Although the Handshake will not be visiting Gorillas in the wild, we will be supporting related organisations and doing what we can to raise awareness of the work undertaken to protect them. If you wish to visit wild gorillas you should do so prior, or post the Handshake expedition.

The expedition to Uganda starts in Entebbe and ends in Entebbe.

Displayed below in red are projected expedition targets where we believe the support provided by the Great Primate Handshake will be most effective. Our expedition targets are subject to change and may or may not be included in the final route/itinerary released prior to departure.

The Great Primate Handshake: Uganda

Expedition Targets

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Information

Kibale Forest is perhaps one of the most awe-inspiring and densely-packed parks in Uganda, as far as natural history goes. Especially in relation to primates, as there are as many as 13 different species here – the highest concentration in any forest in East Africa.

Lake Victoria is 68,800 square kilometres (26,560 mi²) in size, making it the continent’s largest lake, the largest tropical lake in the world, and the second widest fresh water lake in the world.
Entebbe / CSWCT

Situated 35km from Uganda’s capital, Kampala, Entebbe is a pleasant and laid back lakeshore town, with plenty of natural history. The expedition itself will be begin at the Ugandan Wildlife and Education Centre, on the shores of Lake Victoria amongst the diverse range of Wildlife the centre is home to. There is an excellent botanical garden a few minutes walk from the centre, and there’s a vibrant local market not too far away.

Also only a few minutes’ walk away is the Chimpanzee Sanctuary and Wildlife Conservation Trust (CSWCT) – the organisation that manages a Chimpanzee sanctuary – Ngamba Island - located on Lake Victoria and only accessible by speedboat. Following initial training in the tropical surroundings of the education centre, the Handshake will be supporting CSWCT and will be taking a speedboat across Lake Victoria to visit the project. We will also be heavily involved with a number of education projects CSWCT run, both in Entebbe and Kampala.

Ngamba Island

Ngamba Island Chimpanzee Sanctuary was established in 1998 for the care and welfare of chimpanzees requiring a protected and well managed refuge. The island today serves as a powerful educational tool to highlight to others the many threats chimpanzees face.

Kibale National Park

Situated in Western Uganda, Kibale Forest is perhaps one of the most awe-inspiring and densely-packed parks in Uganda, as far as natural history goes. Especially in relation to primates, there are as many as 13 different species here – the highest concentration in any forest in East Africa. Kibale offers excellent bird-watching and beautiful scenery and will certainly be a highlight of the expedition. It is also home to the last stronghold of the Red Colobus Monkey.

The Handshake will be spending up to a week here, working with local community projects and research initiatives in the forest. Kibale Forest is a good example of eco-tourism, and feeding the effects of it back in to the community. A popular initiative is the Kibale Community Fuel Wood project that seeks to reduce dependency on wood from the park through fuel-efficient stoves that decrease the amount of wood needed for cooking. Primates and wildlife living in the park benefit from such projects as habitat loss is reduced, and local communities understand how their actions may benefit or harm the park’s environment through educational activities.

Primate based eco-tourism projects at Kibale have created a number of jobs for locals, who now work as Rangers, showing tourists around the park.

Guided Forest Walks
There is an opportunity for volunteers to go Chimpanzee Trekking in Kibale Forest. The walks cost $70 and are well worth the money for the experience.

Bigodi Wetland Sanctuary
Costs $11 for a local guide and all proceeds go to community projects in Bigodi. Offers one of the best guided bird tours in East Africa and sightings of up to 6 different types of prime.

Ndali Kasenda Crater Lakes
One of the world’s highest concentrations of crater lakes in the surrounding areas to Kibale Forest.
Vehicle / Workshop

The Great Primate Handshake has partnered with Oasis Overland to ensure the safe and efficient-running of the expedition. Oasis Overland adventure travel company was founded in 1997 by Chris Wrede and Steve Crowhurst, who at the time had over 18 years of overlanding experience between them. They are based in rural Somerset and are one of the few UK-based overland companies to maintain their own UK workshop where their vehicles are adapted and built for overland use, and where their crews and trainees receive hands-on training.

The GPH chose Oasis Overland as their partner not only for their experience of overlanding, but because of their policies on environmentally-responsible travel, and their involvement in a number of African charitable projects (full details can be found on their website).

Oasis supports Tourism Concern and is a member of their Ethical Tour Operators Group (ETOGroup). Tourism Concern aims to educate and inform members of their Ethical Tour Operators Group (ETOGroup) to ensure the safe and efficient-running of the expedition. Our overland vehicles act as both a workshop and a home. The vehicles are specifically designed for overland travel and customised by Handshake Productions for use on our Great Primate Handshake expeditions.

The overland vehicle we are using is a Scania 93 series 4x2 truck of between 220 and 280 horsepower.

The truck is equipped with:
- Inward and forward facing coach seats with head rests, providing more storage space for your souvenirs and luggage as well as more leg room for our overland travel groups to stretch out on longer journeys.
- Under-seat storage for your backpack so you have easy access even when driving.
- A mixture of side and rear roll-up and fixed windows, providing extensive viewing opportunities.
- 12V charging points for video and mobile phone batteries.
- On board stereo with MP3, MD or CD walkman adaptor.
- A comprehensive range of spare parts and tools.
- Large dried and fresh food storage capacities.
- Onboard truck safe for valuables and money.
- Overhead lockers for cameras and day-bags.
- Large water-carrying capacity.
- Internal truck buzzer system.
- Internal and external lighting.
- Long range fuel tanks.

Accessory equipment carried:
- Spacious ‘Dome’ or ‘A frame’ style two-person tents.
- Cooler boxes (for storage of fresh food and drinks).
- Professionally compiled expedition medical kit.
- All weather awnings for wet weather and shade.
- Campstools.
- Long range fuel tanks.

All food provided on the expedition will be vegetarian. We don’t have the facilities to store meat or fish onboard the vehicle, therefore all meat/fish products will have to be consumed off the vehicle. Breakfast may include cereal/toast, tea & coffee and lunch may consist of salad, sandwiches and fruit. Depending on where we are travelling or stationed, you may have the opportunity to try local food stalls. The vehicle will stop en-route for water/fresh produce for the evening’s meal.

If you have any specific dietary requirements or allergies then please contact a member of the handshake team so we can discuss your needs. It is impossible to accommodate general food dislikes and therefore we run a, “if you do not like it – pick it out” policy. Accommodation on the expedition will vary depending on location, but will be a mixture of camping/hostels.

Details of accommodation will be released with the itinerary prior to your expedition. Overland life is very much about team work. There will be a different allocated cook group each night giving everyone the chance to show off their culinary skills (or lack of!). When camping, you will be sharing a tent with a buddy and tents will be pitched together.

On travelling days we will be setting off early. The truck can make stops for photos/snacks along the way, and lunch will usually be around 12:30pm - whether it’s in a town or on the side of the road. We will usually camp up for the evening at around 5:30pm. Everyone will be required to pitch in with setting up tables for dinner, boiling water for hot drinks, getting a fire going etc. Because of the nature of our tour, there may be periods of time when we are on the road for a few days, and times when we’re stationary.

For more information about Oasis Overland, visit their website at www.oasisoverland.co.uk.

Safety information

Oasis Overland has Crises Management plans and procedures. In the unlikely event of a major incident occurring, from earthquakes, to road accidents and terrorism, they can respond fully with the reactive logistical support of their contracted Crises Management specialists, Docleaf Ltd. www.docleaf.com.

For more information about Oasis Overland, visit their website at www.oasisoverland.co.uk.

Information

We offset the overland vehicle’s emissions for the duration of an expedition, as well as your return flights through our partner Treeflights.com.

Overland Life: Day-to-Day

Our expeditions enable you to work directly with local organisations striving to conserve primates

(Background image)
Volunteers observing Chacma Baboons
Useful Information

Insurance

Every volunteer MUST arrange personal insurance for the duration of the trip. Make sure you check with your chosen insurer what you are covered for on your policy and look for any loop holes. We recommend Campbell & Irvine for comprehensive cover, but you are free to choose whichever you wish.

Campbell and Irvine Ltd
Tel: 020 7937 6981
Fax: 020 7938 2250
www.campbellirvine.com

If you would like to use Campbell and Irvine, documents will be available to download on the Handshake Facebook group, but please also inform a member of handshake staff if you take up a policy with them. You will need to inform Campbell and Irvine that you are a member of the Handshake.

Safety Information

For the most part of the expedition we will be travelling as a group. However there will of course be times where you will be free to explore on your own/in small groups.

Volunteers are required to pay attention to safety instructions during this time; not wander around alone, especially at night and in towns.

Volunteers will be briefed about safety regulations during the expedition, but please refer to safety guidelines for Uganda at the foreign office website:

VISA / Permit Regulations

British nationals need to have a visa to enter Uganda. This can be obtained from the Ugandan High Commission in London, or at the International airport at Entebbe.

If you are not a British citizen you must contact your nearest Ugandan embassy to obtain the relevant visa requirements as you may be turned away on arrival to Uganda.

Passport Validity

You should have passport with validity remaining.

Travel Prior to the Expedition

We recommend that all volunteers consider travelling pre or post-expedition to see more of the sights you may not experience on the Handshake. Especially post-expedition as there will be a number of people in the group who plan to do some travelling.

There are a number of unique opportunities available in Uganda, so it’s worth making the most of them whilst you are there. The Handshake will not be taking volunteers Gorilla trekking due to both financial and time constraints, but we recommend looking into it either pre or post-expedition if you do not think you have another opportunity. Note - You must buy a permit to visit Uganda’s mountain gorillas. A permit for Bwindi Impenetrable National Park costs US $500 and must be booked in advance.

Arrival Information

Volunteers will not be picked up from the airport.

We will inform you as to the starting location / meeting point prior to your departure. UWEC (Uganda Wildlife Education Centre) is not far from the airport and is recommended as a cheap and safe location to stay prior to the start of the expedition.

As a great number of volunteers will be flying in, you may want to arrange to stay at the same accommodation (in and around Entebbe) with them before the expedition starts.

To facilitate this we recommend joining our Facebook group: Handshake Volunteers, Past & Present.

We will post our recommended accommodation on this Facebook group to help you identify where you may want to stay prior to departure.
The Great Primate Handshake: Uganda

Departure Information

Departure Accommodation
The expedition will be ending in Entebbe, so we recommend that you fly out of Entebbe unless you are travelling on and have arranged a flight elsewhere. Volunteers will need to make their own travel arrangements to the airport. Handshake staff will be able to assist you in arranging transport to the airport should you need it and it is possible to arrange taxis to take you to the airport from the centre itself.

The expedition will finish at 5pm on the last day. Volunteers will be required to arrange their evening’s accommodation if they are not flying out the same night.

Tree Flights
The Great Primate Handshake values the importance of preserving all aspects of the environment and aims to operate as an ethical expedition. We are carbon offsetting all volunteers’ flights through a Welsh-based company, Tree Flights: http://www.treeflights.com/

Flight Details
Before departure we ask you to send us your flight details so in the event of a delayed flight, we know when to expect you. We also ask you to send us details of your Entebbe accommodation that you are staying in the night before the expedition starts. In case we need to contact you.

What to Pack

We are avoiding the wettest months which are in April, May, October and November. It will be useful to pack some of the following items:

- T-shirts and comfortable trousers (jeans etc)
- Long trousers for use at night & breathable socks
- Shorts & swimming suit
- Lightweight rain jacket
- Waterproof shoes/boots e.g. gortex shoes or equivalent
- Backpack (instead of suitcase, to fit in the underseat lockers)
- Camera (preferably with a good lens)
- Lightweight sleeping bag
- Binoculars & Sun hat
- Wildlife-watching guide
- Mobile Phone (It is possible to purchase local sim cards)
- Flip Flops
- Moneybelt
- Water bottle

- String laundry bag
- Mosquito repellent
- Anti-bacteria towel (name yours!)
- In-car charger for ipod/phones etc
- Passport copies & insurance document copies
- Toothbrush and washbag
- A good book for long journeys & headphones
- Spare batteries & spare wallet

Bringing your own equipment (video cameras, laptops etc...) is encouraged but you should contact a member of the Handshake team at the earliest possible opportunity to arrange this.

General conduct

In Uganda, there is a huge social importance of formal greetings. It is considered very rude to directly ask someone a question without an elaborate greeting – at the very least, (and if the person you are asking doesn’t speak English), they should be greeted with a smile, nod of the head and a “Jambo” (the Swahili for hello).

It is considered rude to show emotion publicly, especially affection between the opposite sexes – holding, embracing or kissing would be seriously offensive. On the contrary, it is fine for members of the same sex to hold hands. Men shouldn’t be surprised if a male Ugandan they are in conversation with clasps their hand for a few minutes. Again, on the contrary, homosexuality is taboo. It is also not acceptable to show anger in public.

There is an Islamic element to Uganda, particularly in Kampala, and it is insulting to use your left hand to pass or received anything, or to shake hands. Women tend to dress more conservatively, which may go some way to decreasing the level of hassle received from men, especially in cities.

We ask women volunteers to consider this when packing items of clothing.

Personal costs while on the expedition

Although basic meals, accommodation and game park fees are included in the price, you will need to have spending money for daily costs such as drinks other than water, souvenirs (eco-friendly), other tourist attractions etc. On long travel days, you may be required to buy your own food. Note – in some locations groups may want to go out for a meal at their own cost.

Money

The currency in Uganda is the Uganda Shilling (USH).
For the current exchange rate visit: www.xe.com

If using cash, both the British pound and the US dollar are easy to change in cities. This can be done at either Banks or Forex bureaus – the latter offer less commission and less paperwork. Traveller’s cheques are not as widely accepted as cash (owing to some forgeries a few years ago, that left banks seriously out of pocket) and often carry high commission charges. US dollar bills printed before 2000 are not accepted, as aren’t torn or blemished notes. Higher denominations are easier to exchange. It is advisable to take a VISA debit or credit card for withdrawing cash. Mastercard is rarely accepted across Uganda and credit cards aren’t widely accepted in Uganda except in major cities. We recommend bringing $300 minimum for extraneous costs until we visit a bank where you may withdraw cash.

Handshake Productions is a carbon aware company.
We offset all volunteer and staff flights, including the overland vehicle’s emissions.

CO₂
Below is medical-related information for this expedition.

All information in this section is generic in nature. The Great Primate Handshake team cannot offer medical advice.

However, you must check with your GP or Travel Nurse for advice about the vaccinations/health precautions you should take and inform them of the countries you wish to visit. If you have any existing medical conditions or dietary requirements, please contact a member of the handshake team if you are concerned about managing your condition whilst away. We strongly recommend that your travel insurance includes comprehensive medical cover. Medical facilities, including ambulance services, outside major cities are very limited, and your insurance should cover you for the possibility of medical repatriation. You should also check any exclusions, and that your policy covers you for all the activities you want to undertake. All Great Primate Handshake and Oasis Overland staff are first-aid trained. Oasis Overland has standard procedures in place in the unfortunate event of someone falling seriously ill.

General vaccinations

Please check your immunisation status with your GP or travel nurse. Keeping up-to-date with Tetanus, polio, diphtheria, Hepatitis A is wise – but ask for professional advice about what vaccinations are suitable for Uganda.

Rabies

It is generally recommended to be vaccinated against rabies if you are likely to come into any contact with mammals. Rabies vaccinations buy you time if you are bitten by a rabid animal, and as we will be spending some time away from the major cities, it would be wise to consider this vaccination.

Malaria

The risk of Malaria in many parts of Uganda is considerable and you are advised to take precautions throughout the expedition. For more information please visit http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/destinations/uganda.htm - and see your GP for further advice on what anti-malaria medications are suitable for you.

HIV

You should exercise normal precautions to avoid exposure to HIV/AIDS, which is prevalent across Africa.

Bilharzia

Bilharzia is transmitted through certain snails in fresh water. As a precaution, we ask that you don’t go swimming/paddling in water without consulting a member of staff to see whether the water is a potential risk of the disease. Bilharzia is common in most water sources in Uganda, even in some places advertised as “Bilharzia free”.

Protection from the sun

It is advisable to bring sun screen with you - the African sun is a lot stronger than in the UK so please be mindful of this when packing. Bring a suitable factor of cream for your skin type and other precautions such as long tops to cover up with sun hats etc.

Recommended Reading

Listed below is some suggested reading to give you some background on primates, and Uganda in general. You might find some of it inspirational and, depending on the group you are assigned to, useful prior to the expedition.

Recommended Books:

Primate Related:

- A Primate’s Memoir: Love, Death and Baboons in East Africa: Robert M Sapolsky 2002
- Primate Conservation Biology: Guy Cowlishaw, Robin Dunbar, 2000
- Gorillas in the Mist: Dian Fossey, Holder and Stoughton, 1983
- In the Shadow of Man: Jane Goodall, Collins, 1971

Uganda:

- Uganda, an Oxfam Country Profile: Ian Leggett, Oxfam 2001
- The Lunatic Express: Miller Charles, reprinted by Penguin classic 2001
- I Dreamed of Africa: Kuki Gallmann, 1991
- Out of Africa: Karen Blixen, New edition 1999

Recommended Websites:

- http://www.internationalprimatologicalsociety.org/
- http://www.bbc.co.uk/nature/animals/conservation/primates/
- http://pnr.primate.wisc.edu/
- http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/746213.stm
- http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/country_profiles/1069166.stm
- http://www.aboutuganda.com
- http://www.visituganda.com
- http://www.uwa.org.ug
- http://www.newvision.co.ug
Please join our expedition Facebook group – Handshake Volunteers: Past, Present and Future - which acts as a forum for volunteers to exchange information on fundraising activities, flights, travelling and primate conservation. It will also include information and downloadable documents from the Handshake team.

We’ve prepared a collection of web tools to enable you to accept donations online by credit or debit card provided by Indiegogo. To start using our fundraising tools please contact us at: info@primatehandshake.org stating your name and expedition.

Indiegogo enables you to highlight to your friends and work colleagues just what you are doing to support primate conservation.

Please also contact us regarding any fundraising activities or events you plan. We may be able to assist group fundraising activities or give you local publicity using our existing contacts.

You will be able to download a template letter for local press that provides a summary of The Great Primate Handshake and your role as a volunteer. This will be available on the volunteer Facebook group. If you publicise your expedition in any other way, please send us a draft of the information you are sending out so we can make sure the Handshake is represented correctly.

Contacting us

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For more information visit handshakeproductions.org and primatehandshake.org

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