

# Nyungwe Forest



## Further Links

- Chimpanzee tracking
- Large troops of Colobus Monkeys & other rare primates
- Hundreds of tree and plant species
- Huge variety of rainforest birds
- 50km of walking trails
- Beautiful rainforest and surrounding tea estates

## Situation

South West Rwanda, 250km from Kigali.

## Activities

Tracking to chimpanzees, black and white colobus monkeys, grey-cheeked mangabeys, blue monkey, golden monkey, the Kamiranzovu Swamp or Waterfall walks, birding walks, cultural visits and walks.

Nyungwe Forest National Park sits in a mountainous region covering 970km square, to the south west of Rwanda. It is the largest single area of montane forest in East or Central Africa. There are 50km of walking trails ranging from 1 to 7 hours in duration.

There are huge troops of up to 400 Angolan Colobus Monkeys at Nyungwe which is almost ten times as many as the group size recorded anywhere else. Another attractive monkey found here is the localised L'Hoest's Monkey. There are around 500 chimpanzees in the forest but seeing them is a challenge as the terrain is hilly and rugged and the animals move far! There are in total 13 primate species found at Nyungwe which make up around 25% of the total number in Africa. Several of these are endangered.

Amongst the 86 mammal species found here are a small number of elephants, Giant Forest Hogs and bushpigs. Although rarely seen some small predators are found here such as wild cat, serval, side striped jackal, mongoose, genets and civets (the latter sometimes seen at night around the lodges).

This is a birders paradise with around 275 species including some 25 regional Albertine Rift endemics. One of the most colourful birds seen in the canopy is the bluish coloured Great Touraco which is about the size of a chicken! Other attractive large birds often seen here include a variety of hornbills and other touracos.

Nyungwe receives about 2000mm of rainfall each year and is one of the oldest forests in Africa. This explains its high variety of wildlife and botanical diversity. The trees here are spectacular and the upper canopy reaches 50 - 60m in height. Some of the largest trees include African Mahogany, Mulanje Cedar and Waterberry. Giant Tree Ferns are an attractive smaller tree, many of which flank the sides of the Waterfall Trail. There are more than 240 tree species and over 140 orchid species in Nyungwe.

Nyungwe enjoys a cool climate perfect for the extensive network of well-maintained forest hiking trails that lead to various waterfalls and viewing points; the experience of Nyungwe is the intimacy of the rainforest, where the closed canopy, towering trees and delicate ferns that line the steep gorges can make you feel as though you have been enveloped in the depths of ancient Africa, listening to the mysterious calling and rustling of birds and monkeys hidden in the forest.

**Forest Trails** There are many different forest trails which cover various different terrain, steepness and distance, so there is something for everyone. Shorter bird walking trails can also be enjoyed not far from the park headquarters. Normal half day forest hikes do often take you to the same areas where the Colobus and Chimpanzees pass through, so you may be lucky and see them by chance! The marked trails are accompanied by a forest guide and we advise that you take a porter or too for help on the steep, slippery paths. Nyungwe covers a huge distance and there are many regions still being mapped and discovered now. For hardy, adventurous hikers there is a longer, three day forest hike on the 'Nile - Congo' trail which traverses the forest into hidden depths.

**Canopy Trail** New in 2010, there is now an aerial walkway in Nyungwe - not for those with a a fear of heights! From the park information centre, you descend the 40° slant via a zig-zag foot path to the first tower deep in the forest valley for the 1½ hr walk on the Canopy Walk's suspension bridge. Besides being so high in such a picturesque location, the walk allows access to the upper parts of the forest, where one can see some unique canopy species; primates,, birds, butterflies, plants and insects that live in the roof of the forest which are otherwise invisible but can now be seen at eye level, or even from above. It is an unforgettable experience.

**Chimpanzee Trekking** in Nyungwe is a challenge! Although they are frequently seen, it's not guaranteed. Trekking is in very hilly terrain with steep slopes and deep valleys. Because these semi-habituated Chimpanzees move a lot, sometimes far, deep and high in the hills and valleys in dense forest, it is difficult to see them. There is a second habituated group of chimps about an hours drive from the tea estates in an area called Cyamudongo Forest. This is a tiny area where there are about 25 chimps, often easier to see than Nyungwe's main forest. There are 16 permits available each day for chimp trekking (two groups).

