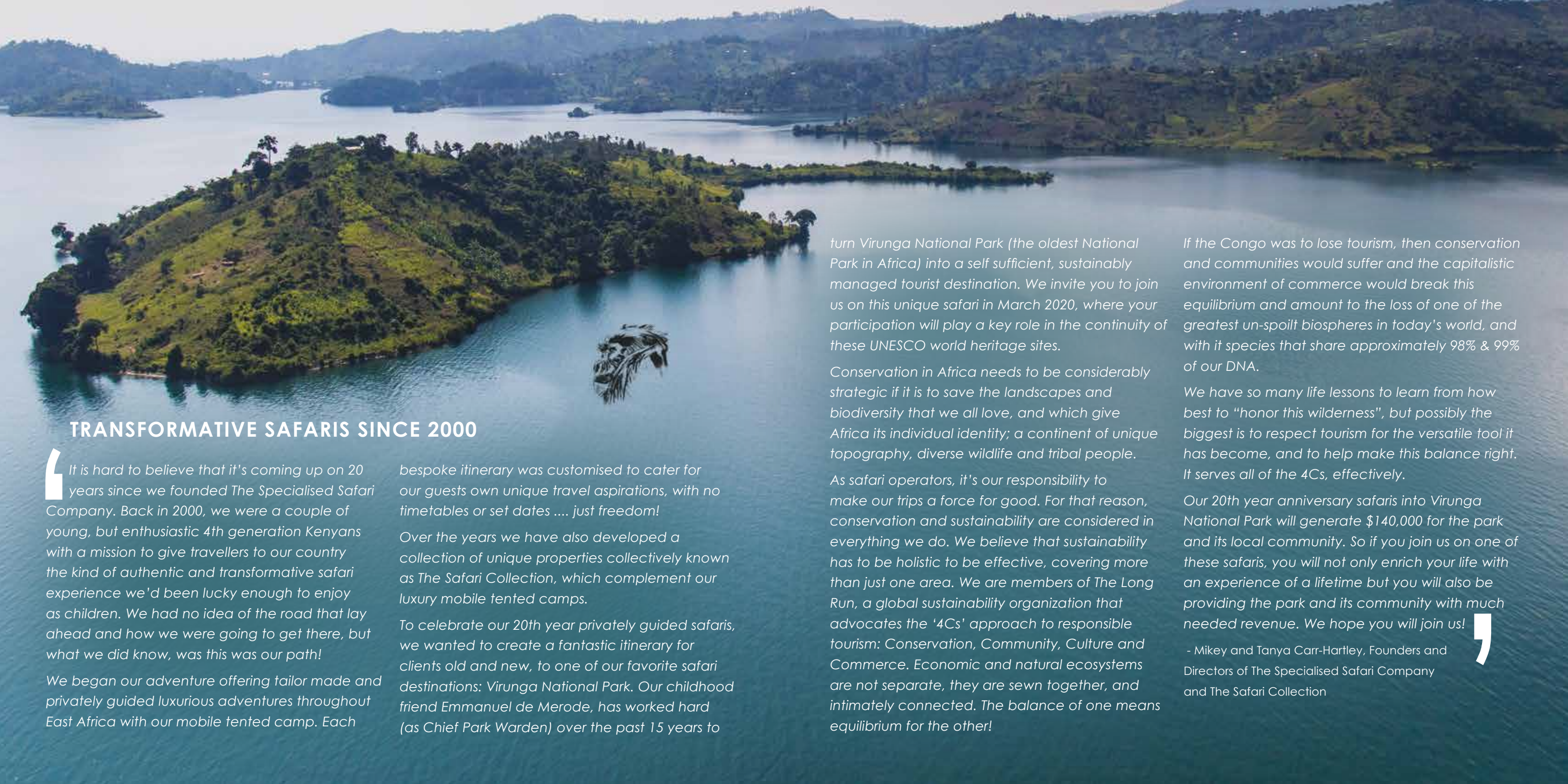




ICE, APES & LAVA LAKES



TRANSFORMATIVE SAFARIS SINCE 2000

It is hard to believe that it's coming up on 20 years since we founded The Specialised Safari Company. Back in 2000, we were a couple of young, but enthusiastic 4th generation Kenyans with a mission to give travellers to our country the kind of authentic and transformative safari experience we'd been lucky enough to enjoy as children. We had no idea of the road that lay ahead and how we were going to get there, but what we did know, was this was our path!

We began our adventure offering tailor made and privately guided luxurious adventures throughout East Africa with our mobile tented camp. Each

bespoke itinerary was customised to cater for our guests own unique travel aspirations, with no timetables or set dates just freedom!

Over the years we have also developed a collection of unique properties collectively known as The Safari Collection, which complement our luxury mobile tented camps.

To celebrate our 20th year privately guided safaris, we wanted to create a fantastic itinerary for clients old and new, to one of our favorite safari destinations: Virunga National Park. Our childhood friend Emmanuel de Merode, has worked hard (as Chief Park Warden) over the past 15 years to

turn Virunga National Park (the oldest National Park in Africa) into a self sufficient, sustainably managed tourist destination. We invite you to join us on this unique safari in March 2020, where your participation will play a key role in the continuity of these UNESCO world heritage sites.

Conservation in Africa needs to be considerably strategic if it is to save the landscapes and biodiversity that we all love, and which give Africa its individual identity; a continent of unique topography, diverse wildlife and tribal people.

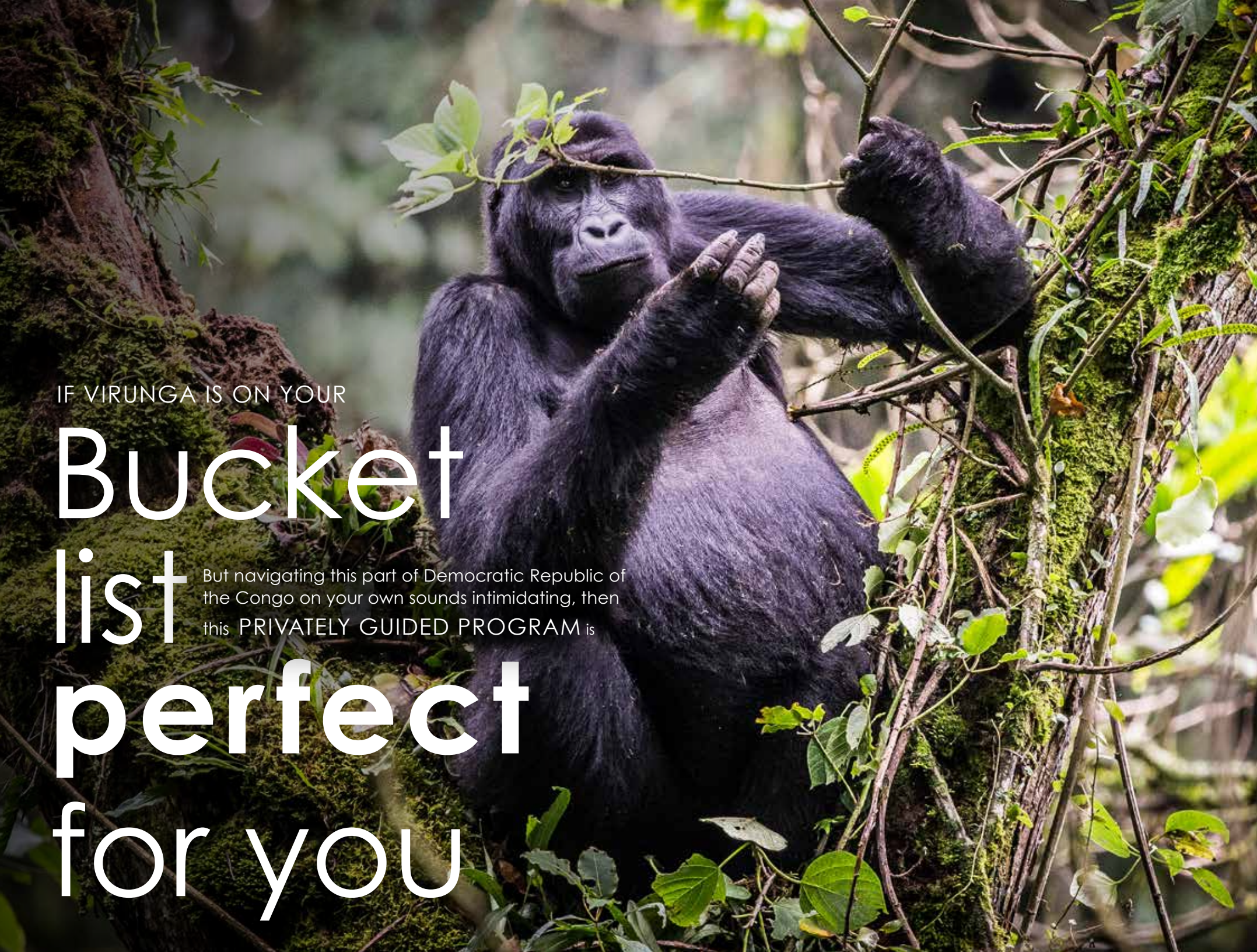
As safari operators, it's our responsibility to make our trips a force for good. For that reason, conservation and sustainability are considered in everything we do. We believe that sustainability has to be holistic to be effective, covering more than just one area. We are members of The Long Run, a global sustainability organization that advocates the '4Cs' approach to responsible tourism: Conservation, Community, Culture and Commerce. Economic and natural ecosystems are not separate, they are sewn together, and intimately connected. The balance of one means equilibrium for the other!

If the Congo was to lose tourism, then conservation and communities would suffer and the capitalistic environment of commerce would break this equilibrium and amount to the loss of one of the greatest un-spoilt biospheres in today's world, and with it species that share approximately 98% & 99% of our DNA.

We have so many life lessons to learn from how best to "honor this wilderness", but possibly the biggest is to respect tourism for the versatile tool it has become, and to help make this balance right. It serves all of the 4Cs, effectively.

Our 20th year anniversary safaris into Virunga National Park will generate \$140,000 for the park and its local community. So if you join us on one of these safaris, you will not only enrich your life with an experience of a lifetime but you will also be providing the park and its community with much needed revenue. We hope you will join us!

- Mikey and Tanya Carr-Hartley, Founders and Directors of The Specialised Safari Company and The Safari Collection



IF VIRUNGA IS ON YOUR

Bucket list perfect for you

But navigating this part of Democratic Republic of the Congo on your own sounds intimidating, then this **PRIVATELY GUIDED PROGRAM** is



Join us on this unforgettable seven-night helicopter safari to discover Virunga National Park, Africa's oldest and most spectacular national park. On this unique safari to Virunga, you will come face to face with a family of mountain gorillas, and watch chimpanzees swinging through the trees. You will fly in a helicopter over the snow-capped Rwenzori mountains, and hover over volcanoes and lava lakes. You'll also have the chance of seeing lions, elephants, hippos and buffalo in lush savannah. All of this, in one park, in one week.

Virunga is one of the most beautiful landscapes on the planet, and the most diverse national park in Africa: half of all the species on the continent are found in Virunga. It's deservedly a World Heritage Site. If ever there was a movie for the natural life on Planet Earth, Virunga would play a starring role. This unique, customized, privately-guided helicopter safari of Virunga National Park and surrounds is available in March 2020.

HIGHLIGHTS

The helicopter safari includes eight action-packed days in Virunga;

- Gorilla trekking with both mountain gorillas in Virunga National Park and Grauer's gorillas in nearby Kahuzi-Biega National Park.
- Flying over the Rwenzoris, the largest snow-capped mountain range in Africa, also known as "mountains of the moon".
- Watching chimps in the rugged terrain of Tongo.
- Flying in a helicopter to the top of Mount Nyiragongo, an active volcano with lava lake, and spending the night at the top.
- Visiting the Senkwekwe gorilla orphanage, where you'll meet the inspirational rangers who look after the orphaned gorillas that have been saved from poachers.
- Exploring Lulimbi's isolated savannah plains, where you'll have a chance to see elephants, hippos, lions and buffalo.

You will also have insider access to the Virunga headquarters at Rumangabo, where you'll learn about what it takes to protect this remarkable park and its wildlife, amid all the challenges.



DETAILS

We have four set-departure dates starting from Sunday 1st – weekly, continuing on the 8th/ 15th and 22nd of March 2020. Fully inclusive prices start from \$1850* per person per day, including all flights to and from Nairobi to DR Congo, all helicopter excursions, Mountain Gorilla, Grauer's Gorilla and Chimp permits, volcano permits, park fees, all transfers and accommodation, food and laundry. This fee does not include international flights, visas, gratuities, drinks and tobacco.

You will be met at Wilson Airport in Nairobi in the morning by a member of our team, before embarking on a charter flight

to Goma in DR Congo, (this is where you will clear customs in DR Congo) and then onto the Virunga park headquarters at Rumangabo. On arrival you will be transferred by road 15 minutes to Mikeno Lodge to check in and meet your guides. There will be two groups of 4, with a private guide allocated to each group. This will be your guide for the duration of the trip and he will stay with you throughout your time in Virunga National Park. Mikeno Lodge will be your base for the next seven days. You will each be assigned a luxury thatched cottage for the week, enabling you to unpack your belongings. All the excursions and treks will be based from Mikeno Lodge.

*Rate is per person/per day and not inclusive of optional extra excursions. Single supplements apply.





Lake Edward

One of the great lakes of Africa lying in the western Rift Valley. Covering 2325sq Km's, the lake is home to an abundant fish species and large pods of Hippos.

The Rwenzori Mountains

Africa's largest snow capped mountain range is a Unesco site which lies on the border of Congo Uganda. As the largest Glacier in Africa it is a source of the Nile with endemic species of birds & plants.

Lalimbi

Boarders onto Queen Elizabeth NP in Uganda. Lalimbi offers a chance to see elephants, herds of buffalo, lions and hippo on the Ishasha River.

Rumangabo Park HQ

Home to the headquarters of Virunga NP. The Senkwekwe Gorilla orphanage and Congo Hounds. The operations room and control center provide a fascinating insight to this massive operation.

Mikeno Lodge

A comfortable base, with 12 individual thatched cottages nestled into the hill-top forest of Rumanagabo, overlooking the lava plains of Virunga National Park.

Kahuzi-Biega

A Unesco World Heritage site named after the two volcanoes- Kahuzi and Biega. Home to the largest population of Eastern Lowland or Grauer's Gorillas.

Tchegera Island

Situated just off the town of Goma on Lake Kivu, Tchegera Island has a front row seat of both active volcanoes of Nyamalagira and Nyiragongo, as well as the whole Virunga Massif.

Bukima Mountain Gorillas

The Gorillas sector in Virunga NP is the home to 300 Mountain Gorillas, 1/3 of the total population. At Bukima there are 4 habituated Gorilla families to visit with a maximum of 6 guests per group.

Kahuzi Biega NP

DAY 1: Arrive in Virunga National Park – afternoon scenic helicopter flight around the volcanoes - overnight at Mikeno Lodge

DAY 2: Drive to Bukima Tented Camp – set off on Gorilla Trek – return to Mikeno Lodge for lunch – evening helicopter flight for sundowners on Nyamuragira volcano – overnight at Mikeno Lodge

DAY 3: Early morning helicopter flight to Lulimbi Tented Camp* – lunch at Lulimbi Tented Camp – evening guided walk in the savannah of the park – overnight Lulimbi Tented Camp

*There is the option to fly up to see Rwenzori Mountains on our way to Lulimbi Tented Camp. This amazing flight will take you across most of Virunga National Park to the ice capped peaks of the Rwenzori Mountains. This flight is not costed in this itinerary and will be an optional extra.

DAY 4: Morning game drive around Lulimbi – late morning helicopter flight to Mikeno Lodge for lunch – visit to the Congo Hounds - afternoon helicopter flight up Nyiragongo Volcano – dinner and overnight on the rim of Nyiragongo Volcano

DAY 5: Early morning helicopter flight along Lake Kivu to Kahuzi Biega – lowland gorilla trek in Kahuzi Biega – helicopter flight to Tchegera for lunch – afternoon helicopter flight back to Mikeno Lodge – visit to Senkwekwe Gorilla Orphanage – dinner and overnight at Mikeno Lodge

DAY 6: Early morning helicopter flight to Tongo – Chimp trek in Tongo – return to Mikeno Lodge for lunch – afternoon option of Chimp trek at Mikeno Lodge or just rest – dinner and overnight Mikeno Lodge

DAY 7: Charter flight from Rumangabo back to Nairobi Wilson Airport – Itinerary ends

Please note that all these locations and activities will take place in your itinerary (weather dependant) but the order as to which they will happen will differ depending on which group you are in.

THE HELICOPTER

The helicopter we will use in the Congo is an Airbus AS350, which many of you have had the pleasure of flying in with us in Kenya. This helicopter will be based at Mikeno Lodge and fly excursions from the lodge every day depending on the activity for the day and group.





The Democratic Republic of Congo isn't an obvious tourist destination, and has often been given a bad press by the international media (as media are prone to do). But this country deserves a much better reputation. It's an **astoundingly beautiful** country, and it's people are some of the friendliest and most welcoming in Africa! Most visitors who come to Congo are overwhelmingly surprised by how **special – and safe –** it is. The DRC (not to be confused with Republic of Congo to the west) is a former Belgian colony, and the biggest country in Africa. Lying straddled on the equator, and containing **Africa's largest expanse of rainforest**, it is one of the **least known and least explored places on the planet**. The abundance of natural wonders – especially in Virunga – is awe-inspiring. If you're looking to experience a safari that is unlike any other, then this helicopter safari is for you.



3 REASONS TO JOIN US ON THIS UNIQUE TRIP TO THE CONGO

VIRUNGA NATIONAL PARK NEEDS TOURISM TO SUSTAIN THE PARK'S PROTECTION

Emmanuel De Merode is warden of Virunga. He and his 750 rangers have gained international recognition for protecting Virunga and improving the livelihoods of the surrounding communities. Virunga is now a highly rated adventure tourism destination, and more than 10 000 visitors have come to the park in the past few years. The park relies on donations and tourism revenue to fund its operations, so without tourists, the park faces a cash shortage. The jobs created from tourism have already made a big difference to the local people, and various other park-funded infrastructure – like hydroelectric power – has helped create security and wealth in one of the poorest regions on the planet.



YOU WILL SAVE MONEY

The reason why we are doing a set date departure is because we are using a helicopter to explore the Congo for these trips. By grouping all the trips together, we can split the costs of the helicopter transfers between all the people in the groups to make it more affordable. By travelling out of 'peak season' flights from the USA are cheaper and accommodation is less expensive. If you were to visit the gorillas in Rwanda, a single entry park fee for the gorillas is \$1500 per person per day!



YOU WILL BE DIRECTLY SUPPORTING VIRUNGA'S WIDOW FUND

More than 160 of Virunga's rangers have died in the line of duty in the past 10 years, the most of any park on the planet. Despite this, Virunga's dedicated rangers still risk their lives every day to protect the mountain gorillas and hundreds of other species of animals. The Virunga Widows' Fund has been set up to ensure that the basic needs of widowed ranger families are met, including health care, primary education for their children, and a basic pension allowance. Your safari will directly be contributing to the Virunga rangers widow fund.

Our guides

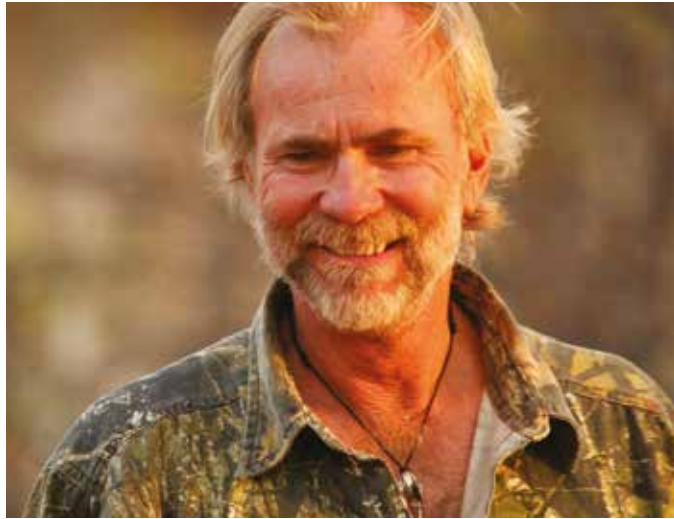
Each of our safaris are either led by Mikey or by one of our hand-picked team of guides who have years of knowledge and experience in Virunga National Park. As each of us have our own areas of expertise and individual enthusiasms, we take the time to 'match-make' our guests with the right guide.

For this trip, your guides will be Mikey Carr-Hartley, John Moller, Gary Hopcraft and Mark Boyd. Each trip will be accompanied by well renowned writer and photographer Scott Ramsay to capture this experience for you. Mikey will be based at Mikeno for the entire month, whilst John, Gary and Mark will each guide a group. If the group elects to continue onto a safari in Kenya or Tanzania after, then the guide can continue with them. Let us introduce you to the guides you will likely meet if you join this safari with us:



MIKEY CARR-HARTLEY

Mikey was raised in the African bush on his family's 45,000-acre ranch in Laikipia, northern Kenya. He spent his childhood surrounded by local hunters, trackers and trappers, gaining invaluable first-hand knowledge of Africa's wildlife. Mikey is passionate about Kenya and he loves the spontaneity of being out in the wilderness, the freedom it offers, and the vibrancy of a life lived alongside diverse cultures and wildlife.



JOHN MOLLER

John is a third-generation Kenyan and a well-known and respected professional hunter. His knowledge of wildlife and their habitats is extensive. John is also passionate about photography and is always keen to lend a hand to anyone interested in learning more. His photographic work has been exhibited and sold overseas for various charitable organisations, such as The Tusk Trust and The African Rainforest Conservancy Trust.



GARY HOPCRAFT

Gary is Tanya's cousin, born and brought up on the Hopcraft family farm on the edge of Lake Naivasha in the Great Rift Valley, Kenya. As a child he was either at home on the farm or on safari with his father. This is where he learnt to love and understand East Africa's wildlife, alongside developing a keen interest in photography. After studying at Bristol University in the UK, Gary returned to Kenya where he splits his time between managing the family farm and being on safari.



MARK BOYD

Mark's family have been in Kenya for five generations and he follows in the footsteps of his grandfather and father as a guide. He grew up in the UK countryside outside Cambridge and left the UK eight years ago, since working in Sudan, Nigeria, Tanzania and Lebanon as a guide, photographer, ornithologist and teacher before settling in Kenya five years ago. His background is in ecology and conservation biology and he is an expert photographer. He has guided safaris all over East Africa including Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, as well of course in Congo where he has been leading gorilla safaris to Virunga for many years.



SCOTT RAMSAY

Photographer & writer

Scott is a South African photographer and writer who has spent the past ten years photographing and writing about Africa's parks and reserves. To date he has explored over 100 protected areas in twelve different countries on the continent. Growing up in Cape Town, he first worked in management consulting and finance, before completing a masters in Journalism at Northwestern University in Chicago. He then began immersing himself in African wilderness areas, using his camera, pen and talks to create awareness for the continent's national parks and wildlife. His first photographic book South Africa's Wildest Places was published in 2016.



Virunga

NATIONAL PARK

Virunga National Park is one of the most inspiring destinations in the world. It is a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** located in eastern DR Congo, on the border of Uganda and Rwanda. Virunga is Africa's oldest national park and is also the continent's most biologically diverse protected area.

The park's 7,800 square kilometres (3,000 square miles) includes forests, savannahs, lava plains, swamps, erosion valleys, active volcanoes, and the glaciated peaks of the Rwenzori mountains.

Virunga is home to **22 primate species**, the most of any place on Earth. Included in this list is the critically endangered mountain gorilla, of which there are about 300 in the park (a third of the world's population). There are also Grauer's gorillas and chimpanzees, making Virunga the only park in the world to host three types of great apes. Another prominent inhabitant of the park is the **Okapi**, an endangered species that resembles a zebra but is more closely related to the giraffe. Large colonies of hippopotami, forest and savannah elephants, lions, and numerous

rare bird species can also be found in the park.

Some 750 park rangers protect the park and its wildlife from poachers, rebel groups, illegal miners and land invasions. The park contains seven of the eight volcanoes in the Virunga mountain range that sprawls across the borders of Congo, Rwanda and Uganda.

Biologist George Schaller noted that the name "virunga" comes from the Kinyarwanda word "kirunga", meaning "high isolated mountains that reach the clouds". It's an apt description and certainly fits the six dormant volcanoes (Karisimbi, Mikeno, Muhabura, Visoke, Sabyinyo and Gahinga). When it comes to Mounts Nyiragongo and Nyamuragira, maybe the other local name - "mufumbiro" - is more fitting, and certainly less euphemistic: "the mountains which cook". These are volcanoes with **active lava lakes**. Karisimbi is the highest at 4 507m.





MIKENO LODGE

Mikeno Lodge is a luxurious lodge tucked into a forested hillside at Virunga National Park Headquarters and is the perfect base for visiting the mountain gorillas. The lodge is situated between three major attractions in Virunga National Park. Its location provides you with amazing panoramic views over the Virunga rift valley and you are only a short walk away are the Virunga HQ and the Gorilla Orphanage.

There is an abundance of bird life, as well as resident blue monkeys, colobus monkeys, and baboons. Chimpanzees are also frequent visitors to the area.





GORILLA TREKKING FROM BUKIMA TENTED CAMP TO SEE THE MOUNTAIN GORILLAS

There are approximately 1,100 mountain gorillas left on earth and one third of them live in the Mikeno sector of Virunga National Park. The remaining mountain gorillas live on the other side of the border with Virunga National Park in Rwanda and Uganda, within the Virunga Massif.

You will drive from Mikeno Lodge to Bukima Tented Camp, where you will embark on a gorilla trek through the tropical forest to spend an awe-inspiring hour in the company of a band of gorillas. From a short distance away, you can take in the impressive sight of a 400lb silverback as he keeps a watchful eye over his family. You will also be able to observe young gorillas pumping their chests, mothers tenderly feeding their young and watch baby gorillas gleefully play-fighting, somersaulting and leaping from tree to tree in their natural environment.





LULIMBI TENTED CAMP

Lulimbi lies in the Ishasha Valley, on the eastern edge of the park's Central Sector. In striking contrast with the volcanoes and gorillas of the south, this beautiful area is dominated by savannah plains, through which the Ishasha River cuts its way and is home to many of the park's elephants and hippos.

The location offers good access to savannah wildlife, experienced rangers and an opportunity to participate in the area's conservation from this quieter, off-beat location. The camp itself consists of shared mess tent and eight en-suite sleeping tents. The tents all face the Ishasha River, with private verandas perfectly positioned to watch a nearby pod of hippos.

This area showcases a completely different terrain to the park's southern camps and serves as a pleasant reminder that Virunga remains largely unexplored and inaccessible to tourism. Lulimbi's savannah plains are enticingly isolated, and as you watch the crocodiles bask on the sand banks, it feels so far away from the gorilla habitat in other parts of the park.

Your stay here will consist mainly of walking safaris with rangers, and participation in the research activities, including elephant monitoring, wildlife counts, and chimpanzee behavioral studies within the Ishasha Valley.



CHIMP TREKKING IN TONGO

Tongo sits to the northwest of Virunga Park headquarters of Rumangabo. Tongo is a small 300-year-old forest that sits on top of a lava flow from Nyamulagira Volcano and is home to a small population of wild chimpanzees. Back in 1987, the Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS), a partner of the park, developed a network of trails through the four distinct hills of Tongo, and habituated the chimpanzees for tourism. Civil unrest put an end to tourism, but in the summer of 2010, FZS re-launched the habituation process with a dedicated team of Community Trackers

who have spent the last few years finding the chimps and spending the day with them in order to make them comfortable with a human presence. According to current (cautious) estimates, there are at least 35 chimpanzees in Tongo. You will trek for about 1 hour from the clearing where the helicopter will land to reach the chimps, sometimes over hilly and rough terrain (the area around here is made up of sharp lava rocks covered in slippery moss). It will certainly be worth it, however, as chimps provide a very different experience compared to a gorilla trek.



GORILLA TREKKING IN KAHUZI-BIEGA NATIONAL PARK TO SEE THE GRAUER'S GORILLAS

Kahuzi-Biega National Park is a hidden secret and a UNESCO World Heritage Site situated in the eastern part of DR Congo near Bukavu town. This National Park is a relatively new tourism attraction that is less known and rarely traversed, therefore, offers guests a unique experience. Kahuzi-Biega National Park was established in 1970 covering a total land area of approximately 6,000 square kilometres.

The park encompasses a vast area of primary tropical forest dominated by two spectacular extinct volcanoes, Kahuzi and Biega, the park has a diverse and abundant fauna. One of the last groups of eastern (graueri) gorillas (consisting of only some 250 individuals) lives at between 2,100 and 2,400 m above sea-level.





NYIRAGONGO VOLCANO

Nyiragongo is a beautiful stratovolcano that features the world's largest lava lake. The volcano's forested lower slopes are home to a variety of animals, including chimpanzees, monkeys, and bushbuck. Nyiragongo's summit rim is largely devoid of vegetation and is frequently dusted with snow. From the rim, visitors can peer down into a churning lava lake and see and hear hot gases exploding up through a mosaic of molten lava.

Nyiragongo volcano is an experience of a lifetime. As you ascend in the helicopter, you will see widespread lava fields and as you land close to the summit and hike the last part of this summit (a short 20-minute hike), you will be rewarded with breathtaking views of the largest lava lake in the world.

You will sleep in one of the twelve summit shelters the night you visit. Each shelter contains two single beds on which visitors can put their sleeping bags.

RWENZORI MOUNTAINS

Known also as the "Mountains of the Moon," the Rwenzoris reach a height of 5,109 m (16,761 ft) and contain the largest glaciers left on the African continent. The Rwenzoris lie in western Uganda along the Uganda-Congo border. The equatorial snow peaks include the third highest point in Africa, while the lower slopes are blanketed in moorland, bamboo and rich, moist montane forest.

The helicopter flight across the Rwenzoris will enable you to access this part of the park and mountain range with effort and ease. On this flight you will see a stunning variety of landscapes, including bamboo and giant fern forests, alpine meadows and lakes, and of course the famous snow-capped peaks. The flora and fauna of the Rwenzoris is equally diverse. Forest elephant, Okapi, chimpanzees, and numerous bird species make the Rwenzoris their home.





NYAMULAGIRA VOLCANO

Otherwise known as 'Nyamuragira', this is the most active volcano in Africa. It often emits lava and ash, though fatalities are rare. Since 1882 there have been more than 40 eruptions. The eruptions of Nyamulagira constantly transform the surrounding landscapes. Parts of the surrounding forests that burn will regenerate within 30 – 40 years! These new forests are of unparalleled scientific value since they are a true living laboratory where scientists and biologists can constantly observe the colonisation of different life forms and the evolution of ecosystems.

You cannot hike this volcano. The helicopter will land beside the erupting lava lake and you will experience a spectacle that you can only reach via helicopter – which means you will be one of a select few to see this natural wonder.



SUGGESTED POST CONGO SAFARI

After your days in Virunga, why not head off to Kenya or Tanzania, two of the best safari destinations in the world for a week of classic big five safaris at some of our favorite properties, or to Cape Town to enjoy the magical city and the cape winelands.



ITINERARY 1: KENYA

- 2 Nights Solio Lodge
- 3 Nights Sasaab
- 4 Nights Salsabila Dhow/ Peponi Kenya Coast or Shwari House Watamu

ITINERARY 2: TANZANIA OPTION

- 3 nights Serian Southern Serengeti/ Mwiba Lodge – Wildebeest calving season
- 1 night Ngorongoro Crater Lodge
- 3 Nights Forest Chem Chem – Lake Burungi -Tarengire/ Manyara ecosystem
- 3 Nights Mnemba Island Zanzibar

ITINERARY 3: VIC FALLS & CAPE TOWN

- 2 Nights Victoria Falls
- 3 nights Ellerman House Cape Town
- 3 Nights La Cle Country Lodge or Delaire Graff Estate

All photographs courtesy of Specialised Safaris, Scott Ramsay and Virunga National Park.
For more information please contact us directly at tanyamikey@specialisedsafaris.com

“ Mikey Carr-Hartley took me to Virunga in the summer of 2014, just after its southern sector had re-opened after years of war and political upheaval. Together we tracked mountain gorillas and climbed Nyiragongo, a live volcano 3,470 metres high, where we camped on the rim of the world’s largest lava lake. He was a superb guide - extremely knowledgeable, a very good judge of risk and great company. Westerners may be nervous about visiting the Democratic Republic of Congo, but it is an amazing, undiscovered country and with Mikey they will be in the best possible hands. ”

- Martin Fletcher,
Journalist, Financial Times



specialisedsafaris.com

+254 (0)733 609 862

tanyamikey@specialisedsafaris.com