



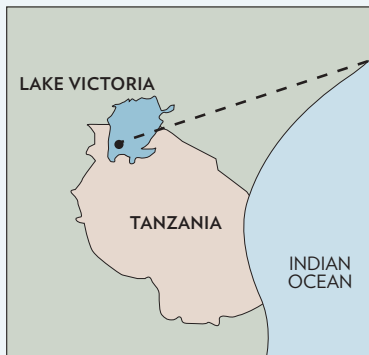
Asilia

GENUINE SAFARIS | GENUINE DIFFERENCE

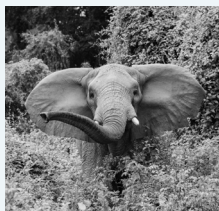
**RUBONDO ISLAND**

*Chimpanzee Habituation Experience*





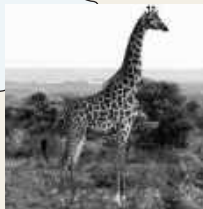
# RUBONDO ISLAND NATIONAL PARK



**ELEPHANT:**  
Initially introduced by Grizmek, the elephant population now numbers over 40.

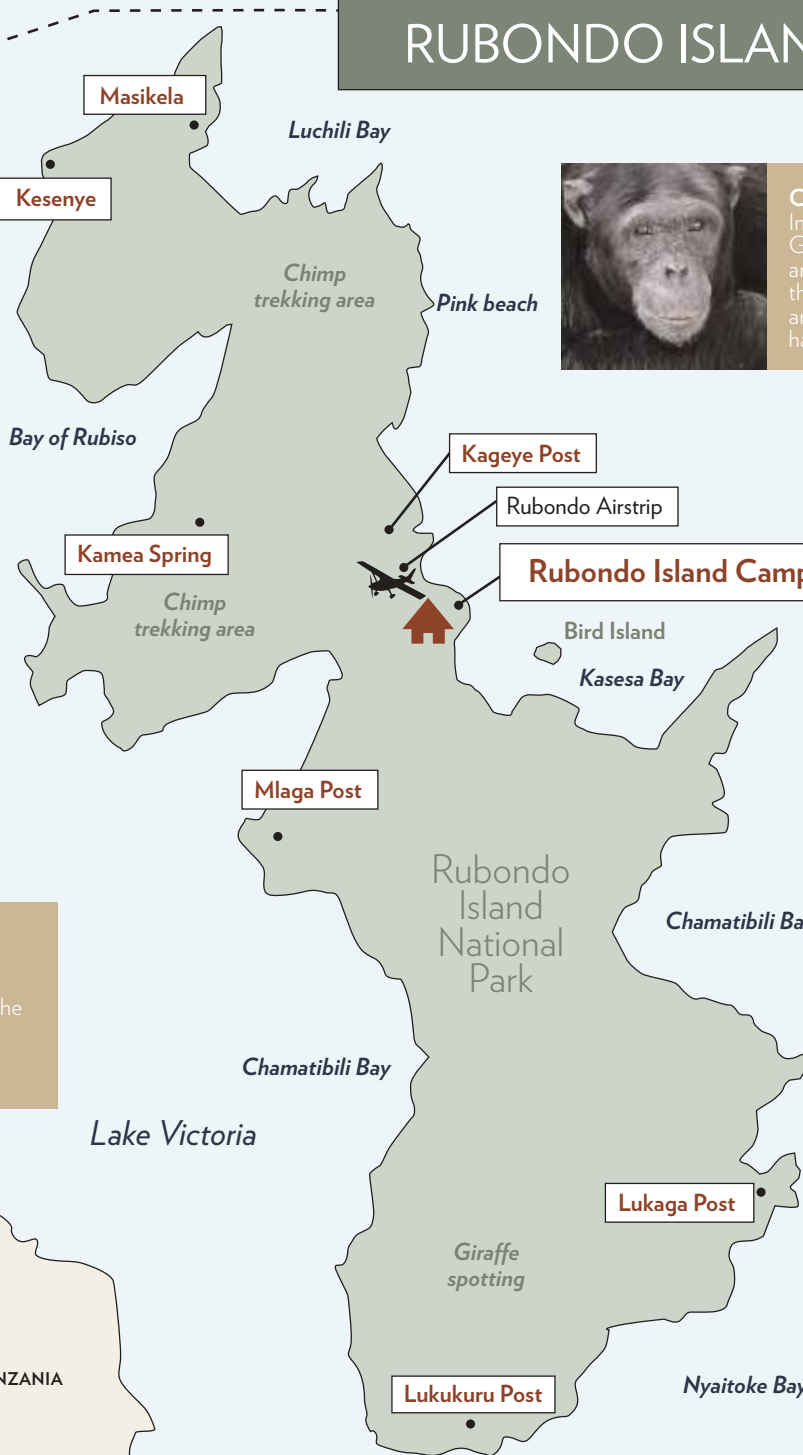
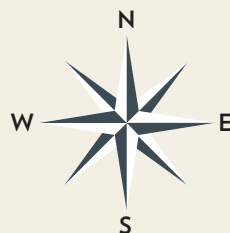


**ORCHIDS AND BUTTERFLIES:**  
Rubondo Island is home to many different species of exotic orchid which in turn attract an exceptional variety of colourful butterflies.



**GIRAFFE:**  
There is a large breeding population of giraffe on the island, usually seen in the open areas in the south.

**LOCATION:**  
Rubondo Island National Park is located on the south-western corner of Lake Victoria, the second largest lake in the world. The lake is the source of the longest river in the world, the River Nile. The park itself is 456.8 km<sup>2</sup> of which 236.8 km<sup>2</sup> is dry land and 220 km<sup>2</sup> is water and comprises 11 small islets of varying sizes. It is the largest island national park in Africa.



**CHIMPANZEE:**  
Introduced by Bernard Grizmek in the 1960's, there are now over 35 chimps on the island, many of which are in the process of being habituated to humans.



**FISH:**  
Fishing for Nile Perch is exhilarating, with the largest caught thought to be over 80 kg's.



**BIRDS:**  
The island is a birdwatcher's paradise with over 300 resident and migratory birds, including the African Grey parrot, pied kingfisher, and an extraordinary concentration of fish eagles.

| KEY |          |
|-----|----------|
|     | Camp     |
|     | Airstrip |

## RUBONDO ISLAND

In the southwest of Lake Victoria lies Rubondo Island, an extraordinary example of wildlife conservation. It's Africa's largest island national park at 26 kilometres long and up to 10 kilometres wide. More than 75% of the island is covered in pristine equatorial rainforest.

Since the 1960s, the island has been a haven for wild chimpanzee, sitatunga antelope, elephant, colobus monkey, giraffe, hippopotamus, and crocodile. Rubondo Island Camp is the only accommodation in the national park, making it one of the most special places to visit in Tanzania. Aside from a handful of park wardens and researchers, as a guest, you have the island to yourself.

Walk through the dense forest looking for chimpanzee in the canopy above, cruise around the peaceful lake at sunset with a drink in hand or head out with a pair of binoculars to spot some of the 300 bird species that visit the island.

The island has its own airstrip and Auric Air operates daily flights from the Serengeti to Rubondo Island and onward to Kigali in Rwanda. This is great to combine chimpanzee and gorilla trekking trips. The temperatures on Rubondo are pleasant all year round, but the best time to visit is during the dry season from June to September. This is also the best time for walking, as the trails are easier to navigate when they are dry.





## CHIMPANZEE HABITUATION EXPERIENCE

Rubondo Island Camp offers a base for guests to experience Grzimek's Noah's Ark Project first-hand with a guided trek into the pristine tropical forest to track the primates. Since 2021, between 92% and 97% of visitors have managed to see chimpanzee during their habituation experience. Since 2020 visitors have been successful in observing chimpanzee within close proximity of about 10-15 meters, with most sightings lasting 30 minutes and more. There are two chimpanzee trekking areas on Rubondo Island. Depending on where the chimps are situated and their visibility, you may need to take a game drive or boat ride and then venture on foot to see them. Throughout the year the chimpanzee habituation experience can be conducted according to the availability of food and weather conditions.

Take a look at our seasonality sheet on page 8 for more info.

Chimpanzee are renowned for not sitting still, so guests should come prepared with a spirit of adventure and a reasonable level of fitness. Please note that the chimpanzee experience is not suitable for anyone unable to hike on hilly terrain for about two hours. Chimpanzee sightings are not guaranteed, however visiting during the dry season from June through October offers guests the best chance to spend time with our chimpanzee. *Please note guests must be over 12 years of age and the group is a maximum of eight per trek. To accommodate the experience, a two night minimum stay at Rubondo Island Camp is required.*

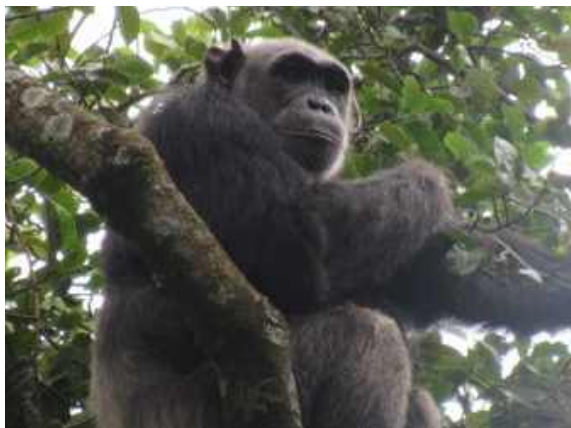


## MEET THE CHIMPANZEE OF RUBONDO ISLAND

Family relationships are vital to chimpanzee. They live in extended family groups of as many as 20-120 individuals. They have a fission-fusion social organisation in which they break off into smaller interchangeable groups and periodically come together. With 30+ chimpanzee that have been successfully habituated in the north of Rubondo Island, this group of chimpanzee have

developed a social structure consisting of an alpha male, alpha female, high ranked adult males, and a few adult females. It is common to hear the chimpanzee before seeing them, with their vocalisations reverberating through the forest as they call to each other in a sort of bonding ritual.

**Let's meet them:**

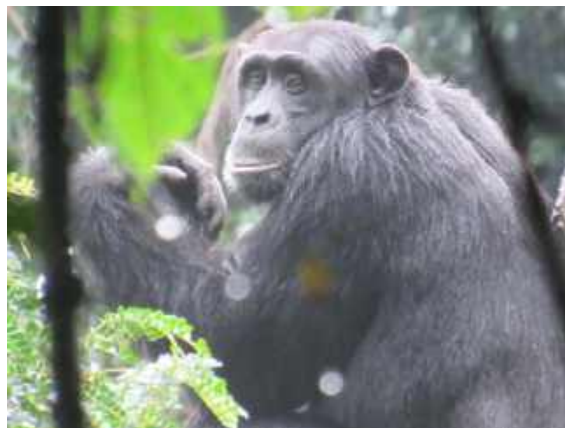


**MSUKUMA**  
ALPHA MALE

**Name origin:** Msukuma has been named after a member of the Tanzanian parliament who visited Rubondo Island National Park, because of his strength and confidence.

**Age:** 41 years old

**Fast facts:** Msukuma is one of the most habituated chimps. He has become quite elusive over the past year or two and spends most of his time now leading his group to ensure they are aware of the most abundant fruit and food locations.



**MAMA MONYO**  
ALPHA FEMALE

**Name origin:** Mama Monyo has been named after her favourite ranger's wife.

**Age:** 37 years old

**Fast facts:** One of the first chimp to be habituated at Rubondo Island and an elder to all. She is the highest-ranked to all the females, and her primary focus is to lead and teach as well as calling at foraging time. Mama Monyo can feed other female babies at feeding time and young boy Silvester will be associated with her so he can learn as he grows. She is very polite and has a habit of escorting the trackers when they head back.



**SARIGE**  
SECOND-RANKED MALE FROM  
ALPHA MALE, MSUKUMA

**Name origin:** Sarige was named after a tracker because of his confident walking style. He also has a lot of fur on his thighs, and this makes it look like he is carrying a small backpack, similar to the one Sarige carries.

**Age:** 25 years old

**Fast facts:** Sarige is the most confident and fearless of the chimpanzee and will move closer to people with absolutely no fear. When he is up in the trees he comes down to meet guests and passes through groups with ease. Sarige will more than likely take over from Msukuma in the coming months because of his strength.



## MEET THE CHIMPANZEE OF RUBONDO ISLAND



### HOBOKERA SECOND-RANKED FEMALE FROM ALPHA FEMALE, MAMA MONYO

**Name origin:** Hobokera has been named after her lead ranger's officer, Hobokera

**Age:** 18 years old

**Fast facts:** Hobokera is a high ranked female chimpanzee. She is known to be very polite. She is fully habituated and has given birth twice which means that other female chimpanzee babies can now associate together with her and her babies. The young learn a lot from Hobokera, especially when they reach a place with plenty of fruits or if there is a kill. She is always ready to share the foods and her knowledge.



### MGWESA THIRD-RANKED MALE FROM ALPHA MALE, MSUKUMA

**Name origin:** Mgwesa was named after a tracker who would visit often to ensure the safety of the chimpanzee.

**Age:** 8 years old

**Fast facts:** At 8 years of age, he is classified as a grown male chimpanzee. Mgwesa has a great sense of humour and likes to imitate people, often playing the joker and has a lot of fun playing around for guests. Mgwesa is the third-ranked chimpanzee from Msukuma and Sarige and he spends time away from females, rather than travelling with the older males to learn from them.



### DINGI YOUNG MALE CHIMPANZEE

**Name origin:** Dingi was named after the ranger Bahati (nicknamed Dingi) because of his curiosity and Dingi loved following Bahati whenever he saw him.

**Age:** 6 years old

**Fast facts:** Dingi was born on Rubondo Island National Park and therefore is very comfortable being around people. He is fearless when guests are around and loves swinging through the trees watching people and then moving back to his group.

## MEET THE CHIMPANZEE OF RUBONDO ISLAND



**SILVESTER**  
YOUNG MALE CHIMPANZEE

**Name origin:** Silvester was named after the tracker Silvester, who shared the same lighter complexion as the baby chimpanzee.

**Age:** 5 years old

**Fast facts:** Silvester was born on Rubondo Island National Park and is very clever but quite shy. When he sees people, he will tend to shy away and join the group. Silvester is a young male, so he still associates with the females in the group to learn more from them.



**DOGO**  
YOUNG MALE CHIMPANZEE

**Name origin:** Dogo, meaning 'young' in Swahili

**Age:** 4 years old

**Fast facts:** Dogo is charming and fearless. He is a very curious and confident little boy that always leaves you smiling after seeing him. When he sees guests, he lets the rest of the group move forward while he swings around the branches above you and sometimes calls out to you while up in the tree. He loves fishing for termites and being around the girls where he will jump on their backs to practice his mating to show his agemates.



**SAIMON**  
YOUNG MALE CHIMPANZEE

**Name origin:** This young chimp was named after a tracker called Saimon because of his curious nature and always observing his surroundings.

**Age:** 3 years old

**Fast facts:** Saimon is one of the younger chimpanzee and is still associated with his mother. As he was born in Rubondo Island National Park and has been aware of trackers and people for the duration of his life he has become very curious and clever, trying to escape his mother to get closer to people. Guests really enjoy spending time with Saimon.

# RUBONDO ISLAND SEASONALITY SHEET

Asilia camp: Rubondo Island Camp

❄ Minimum average temperature ☀ Maximum average temperature ☁ Average rainfall



## JANUARY

From the end of December and into January the chimpanzee move from the centre of the island (Kamea & Masekela areas) toward the north edge of the island (Kasenyee). The short rains are finishing toward the end of January. For birders, the best time to visit is between December and March, when the migrant flocks arrive.

❄ 18°C / 64°F ☀ 27°C / 81°F ☁ 159mm / 6.3in

## FEBRUARY

Chimpanzee will move randomly to find and stock up on food resources making their movements unreliable while on their hunt for leaves, fishing termites and locust. Chimpanzee are renowned for not sitting still, so come prepared with a spirit of adventure and a good level of fitness.

❄ 18°C / 64°F ☀ 28°C / 82°F ☁ 122mm / 4.8in

## MARCH

The heavy rains are on their way making the experience slightly more difficult as when it is raining the chimpanzee can be silent and isolated. The chimpanzee habitations experience is done according to the availability of food and weather conditions.

❄ 18°C / 64°F ☀ 28°C / 82°F ☁ 190mm / 7.5in

## APRIL

*Rubondo Island Camp closed — long rains*

❄ 18°C / 64°F ☀ 27°C / 80°F ☁ 203mm / 8in

## MAY

*Rubondo Island Camp closed — long rains*

❄ 18°C / 64°F ☀ 28°C / 82°F ☁ 93mm / 3.7in

## JUNE

Moving into June, the long rains have ended. This is the best time to visit Rubondo Island for the habituation experience. The dry season is from June to October. This is also the best time for walking, as the trails are easier to navigate when they are dry.

❄ 17°C / 62°F ☀ 28°C / 82°F ☁ 34mm / 1.3in

## JULY

The dry season ensures there is enough food for chimpanzee. 80 Percent of a chimpanzees' diet consists of fruits. Most fruits ripen during this period and it's these fruit trees that keep larger groups of chimpanzee in a location for longer periods, making it easier to find and stay with them.

❄ 16°C / 60°F ☀ 28°C / 82°F ☁ 12mm / 0.5in

## AUGUST

August brings great chimpanzee sightings as they spend lots of time grazing and socialising. This means less movement and a better chance of you seeing the chimpanzee together as a group.

❄ 17°C / 62°F ☀ 28°C / 82°F ☁ 0mm / 0in

## SEPTEMBER

Light rains start to show and as we move into mid-September the availability of fruits will be shorter, thus causing the chimpanzee to move from one place to another to look for food.

❄ 18°C / 64°F ☀ 28°C / 82°F ☁ 106mm / 4.2in

## OCTOBER

The chimpanzee will stay in high food supply areas for a few days and then move on to find further Saba comorensis and Phoenix reclinata fruits. They can also attempt to hunt for sitatunga, bushbuck, vervet monkey and occasionally bushpig.

❄ 18°C / 64°F ☀ 28°C / 82°F ☁ 218mm / 8.6in

## NOVEMBER

The short rainy season at Rubondo is from November to December. The water runoff from the rain may impact activities; therefore, your walking trails may become demanding to navigate on foot. By mid-November, the landscape erupts with vivid colour, tall grasses are joined by wild jasmine, 40 species of wild orchid as well as many other gorgeous flowers.

❄ 18°C / 64°F ☀ 27°C / 80°F ☁ 267mm / 10.5in

## DECEMBER

In December while the flowers are blooming, the migratory birds arrive and usually remain in the park until February. You may see martial eagle, sacred ibis, bee-eaters, coucal, hornbill, sunbirds and many other feathered fauna foraging, hunting and breeding within the park.

❄ 18°C / 64°F ☀ 27°C / 80°F ☁ 0mm / 0in



## HISTORY OF THE HABITUATION

Professor Bernhard Grzimek of the Frankfurt Zoological Society established Rubondo Island as a haven for endangered species as a passion project in the 1960s. Over a four-year period (1966-69), he released 16 west African chimpanzee rescued from European zoos in four cohorts onto the island. The animals had no rehabilitation or pre-release training but due to being wild-born after just one year on Rubondo Island, they were able to find and eat wild foods and construct nests for sleeping.

They successfully reverted to an unhabituated state characteristic of wild chimpanzee and remained secretive. From 16 founding chimpanzee, the population has now grown to over 60+ individuals and have divided into two groups (one group at the north and the other in the south). The group in the north of 30+ individuals are very well habituated and have a big home range that they move according to availability of food. Our guides have named the four calling points Kamea, Kibandala, Masekela and Kasenye. They can be accessed by car or boat depending on the direction of chimpanzee. This is the only reintroduction of wild chimpanzee from west African

populations to eastern Africa and is viewed by many conservationists as a possible future for some species of chimpanzee where habitats have been encroached upon in west Africa. With the help of the Honeyguide Foundation — a key organisation working to involve local community members and training them as guides and trackers — habituation has been successful, enabling researchers to study and get closer to the chimpanzee. A team of dedicated trackers go out daily to track and log direct GPS coordinates of the chimpanzee. An Asilia guide, with a tracker and a Tanapa Ranger, will then follow with the guests.

Studying and understanding these chimpanzee is important for the future of other chimpanzee that might need to be rescued and reintroduced into the wild. Asilia's Rubondo Island Camp is the only camp on the island and the only revenue source to keep the park protected and chimpanzee safe, while also buying locally and hiring locally to support the nearby communities. You can help the chimpanzee too; your visits continue to habituate these chimpanzee and enable us to understand them more.





