# Kenya and Uganda 11 days Combined Trip

Zhou Fangyi with 3 friends

The Mara-Serengeti savanna and the mountain gorilla are both highlights of African mammal watching. For people who are busy with work and have only short holidays, but eager to experience much, Airkenya is offering a very good choice from June to September. There is a flight from Masai Mara, Kenya to Entebbe, Uganda, taking only 3 hours. If you want, you can further connect it with Aerolink (Uganda) flight to several Ugandan parks. Though these flights are often delayed, both Airkenya and Aerolink announce that they guarantee all their connecting flights.



Kazinga Channel, Queen Elizabeth National Park, Uganda

## June 15<sup>th</sup>, Nairobi – Masai Mara

We arrive at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport in the morning and headed directly to Nairobi National Park. Paying entrance fee took half an hour. We spent this time with the common warthogs and vervet monkeys just outside the park gate.





Common warthog and vervet monkey

Olive baboon

When we finally get in, we meet a large troop of olive baboons. It was already in the mid-morning and our game drive took only 2 hours. We saw some common mammals including impalas, Coke's hartebeests, African buffalos, Masai giraffes and hippopotamuses. The only special thing was a serval hunting a rodent near the road.





**Impala** Serval

Then we visited SWT Elephant Nursery 11:00 – 12:00. There were one orphan black rhinoceros and many orphan African bush elephants on exhibit. They will all be released to the wild when they grow up. Nairobi National Park itself is a sanctuary for wild rhinos, while the young elephants will be transferred to units at Chyulu Hills or Tsavo East before they finally go back to the wild. It is good to support the conservation program of Sheldrick Wildlife Trust.





Orphan black rhinoceros

Orphan African bush elephants

We took the 14:00 – 14:40 Airkenya flight from Wilson Airport to Serena Airstrip at Mara Triangle, the west section of Masai Mara National Reserve, divided from the main section by the Mara River. We checked in Mara Serena Safari Lodge, and just in time for the afternoon game drive. Mara Serena Safari Lodge is lovely, with small but comfortable rooms, delicious food and amazing views of the savanna even from our room. The lodge was fenced but still good for mammal watching. We found resident common warthogs, olive baboons, bush hyraxes, common dwarf mongooses and a cape bushbuck.







Common dwarf mongoose





Cape bushbuck

View from Mara Serena Safari Lodge

The first afternoon we had visited the northern corner of Mara Triangle. There were a lot of woodlands, shrubs, tall grasses and marshes, which provided habitat for high diversity of wildlife. However, sometimes it was too lush to see the animals clearly. We saw common warthogs, topis. Thomson's gazelles, defassa waterbucks, African buffalos, Masai giraffes, African bush elephants and hippopotamuses wallowing in marshes on the wet grassland.

Guides at Mara make high use of radio and mobile phones to communicate with each other. We were lucky to see four black rhinoceros together, including one mother with two calves together, and one solo individual nearby. All rhinos except the youngest calf were ear notched for monitoring. The rhinos were lying inside tall grass, we waited for 1 hour for them to come out. It was already 18:00, as the close time was 18:30, we must drive directly back to our lodge. When it was almost dark, we encounter a spotted hyena not far from our lodge.







Defassa waterbuck

Masai Mara together with far northern Serengeti hold one of the few full indigenous populations of black rhinoceros in Africa, not reintroduced and no individuals translocated from other populations. The other indigenous populations are at Chyulu Hills in Kenya, Moru Kopjes of Serengeti in Tanzania, Palmwag in Nambia, Hluhluwe–iMfolozi and Mkuze in South Africa.

### June 16th, Masai Mara

Today we departed for game drives at 6:00 before the dawn, and heading to the Kenya – Tanzania border. This area is mainly open grassland, with fewer trees and shrubs. Early in the morning, we saw more topis and Thomson's gazelles. They were the commonest mammals at Masai Mara this time, As the main part of the great migration of wildebeests and zebras had not arrived. While we still saw some small herds of western white-bearded wildebeests near the border, along with common warthogs, impalas and Coke's hartebeests and African buffalos. We got a cheetah, and soon noticed three male lions nearby.



Western white-bearded wildebeest



Thomson's gazelle and Grant's gazelle



Lion and African buffalo



Cheetah

Someone had found a leopard, but when we arrived at the location, we did not see it, neither did most visitors there. The leopard was far away and hided in the tall grass. Off road drive is prohibited in Masai Mara.

We went back to the lodge at 9:30 for a late breakfast, and after lunch went out again at 14:30 towards the border again. We saw topis, Thomson's gazelles, common warthogs, impalas and Coke's hartebeests, olive baboons, Masai giraffes, hippopotamuses, African buffalos and a male lion again, and added plain zebras, Grant's gazelles and common elands to our list. In the thick grass along a stream, we saw a bohor reedbuck. African bush elephants were rare in this area, but they were very common, almost everywhere at the northern corner of Mara Triangle. Obviously, they preferred more lush area rather than open grassland.





Masai giraffe







African buffalo

**Bohor reedbuck** 

There were many artificial burning areas near the border, on both Masai Mara and Serengeti site. Burn the old grass could promote the growth of new grass, which might be good for grazers that feed on short grass, such as wildebeests, topis,

hartebeests, Thomson's gazelles and warthogs. However, I am not sure how this will influence buffalos and zebras that feed on tall grass. Burn also kills shrubs, which regrow much slower than grass. As the shrubs at Masai Mara keep reducing, replaced by open grassland, the suitability for browsers such as black rhinoceroses may decrease.





Topi and Thomson's gazelle

Impala and common warthog

As it getting dark, we drove back to our lodge, encountered a black-backed jackal, and soon two lionesses not far from our lodge. This night we took a night game drive from 19:00-21:00 offered by Serena Lodge. No wonder, we saw the same lionesses again, and this time there were three of them. Then, two male lions came, they just walked on the road, so we followed them for a long period. After finally said goodbye to the lions, we saw impalas, African buffalos and a hippopotamus. As for the real nocturnal animal, we saw a white-tailed mongoose on the road, but it went into the tall grass before we were close enough to took a photo. When we were almost back to our lodge, we encountered a African savanna hare jumping unhurriedly in front of our jeep, but suddenly turned back and ran fast towards us, because there was a spotted hyena ahead.



Black-backed jackal



African savanna hare

### June 17th, Masai Mara

Today we moved to the main section of Masai Mara National Reserve from Mara Triangle. Formerly, the most convenient way was the Purungat Bridge across the Mara River, but it was destroyed by the flood in late April. Instead, we drove north through Mara Rianta. On the community land, there were also African bush elephants and plain zebras roaming.



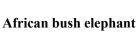


African bush elephant

Plain zebra

Soon we got into the National Reserve through Musiara Gate. It was already 9:00 in the mid-morning, we encountered common species, including topis, Thomas's gazelles, Coke's hartebeests, African buffalos, African bush elephants and a spotted hyena. As it is less possible to find special animals at this time, when stayed longer time with the elephants. This area was drier than Mara Triangle, no large marsh so hippopotamuses were only saw in the main river. At noon, the weather was hot, so the open grassland was almost empty of animals. However, we got the news that a pride of lions had hunted a warthog.







Lion

Later in the afternoon, we searched hills, bushes, and rocky areas for the leopard without success, only found more elephants, topis, impalas, giraffes, and a single vervet monkey at the edge of the woodland. At dark we checked in Muthu Keekorok Lodge. This lodge is deep inside the reserve, and not fenced, so guests are not allowed to walk in the yard after dark unless accompanied by the staff. Near the lodge, many hippopotamuses lived in a man-made dam and there was a bar overlook it.





Masai Mara grassland

Hippo Bar at Keekorok

#### June 18th, Masai Mara - Entebbe

This day we would take the flight from Keekorok Airstrip departing at 08:15 in the morning. We check out the lodge at 5:30, and drove to the wildlife hotspot. At 6:30 the sunrise, animals began to show up. A pride of lions were stalking a mix herd of topis and hartebeests. Impalas, Thomas's gazellas, topis and common elands were in high density. While lions, cheetahs, spotted hyenas and black-backed jackals were walking around.



Coke's hartebeest and topi



Spotted hyena and Thomas's gazelle

The early morning game drive here was much more productive than the afternoon. For a moment, we thought we were in a safari park. The early morning game drive was also worthy for bird watching, and we got our first secretary bird and southern ground hornbill. We really wanted to enjoy our time here, but we had to rushed to the airstrip to catch the flight. Anyway, we were late because a bull elephant blocked the road. Luckily, the flight was later than us. Airstrips at Masai Mara were more like bus stations. There was no check-in or security check. Planes landed and launched one by one. Airline stewardess came out to tell travelers which flight it was. If it was not your flight, just wait another one.

The Airkenya flight took a stop at Kisumu for immigration. We finally arrived at Entebbe International Airport at 12:00. The staff of Aerolink assisted everyone of this flight with luggage and immigration. We had lunch then took a 1.5-hour drive to Mabamba Bay Swamp bird watching cruise, mainly for the shoebill and of course we saw it, along with many other birds.

### June 19th, Entebbe – Queen Elizabeth National Park

We took a long drive, start at 7:00, with a lunch break, and finally arrived at Katunguru, the gate of Queen Elizabeth National Park at 16:30. We firstly visited the Kasenyi Plains, the savanna habitat. This savanna had quite different feel with Masai Mara. The landscape trees here were candelabra trees rather than fever trees. We quickly saw many Ugandan kobs on a lek, common warthogs and a male lion.





Ugandan kob on a lek

Lion

Then we turned back and drove through the Channel Track, on the north shore of Kazinga Channel to Mweya, the bushland habitat. On this track, common species are in high density, we saw amazing many elephants, defassa waterbucks, African buffalos, common warthogs, olive baboons, banded mongooses at a hippopotamus grazing on the land in just 1 hour.





**Defassa waterbuck** 

African elephant

We stayed at Mweya Safari Lodge. Both the room and the public area offered great view of the Kazinga Channel. Elephants, buffalos and hippopotamuses could be seen in large number on the opposite shore, though far away. The lodge was not fenced, and there were resident common warthogs and banded mongooses in the yard.



View from the room of Mweya Safari Lodge



Banded mongoose and common warthog

## June 20th, Queen Elizabeth National Park

There were two sites for chimpanzee tracking near Queen Elizabeth National Park, Kyambura Gorge and Kalinzu Forest. We chose Kalinzu, where a group of around 50 chimpanzees were habituated. During the tracking in the morning, we saw redtailed monkeys and eastern black-and-white colobuses. Half an hour later we encountered two individuals cross the trail, and another half an hour later we arrived where three individuals feeding on a fig tree. A female was in estrus, and two males were pursuing her. We watched them for an hour and just before we left, two baby chimpanzees came.





Eastern black-and-white colobus

Chimpanzee

At noon we took a detour to Queen Elizabeth Bush Lodge for the giant forest hog. The lodge overlooked a swamp, where the hogs often foraging. We did saw on in the dense shrub, but it did not come to the clear viewed area, because the swamp was occupied by elephants. We saw a tantalus monkey on the bushland near the Bush Lodge area.







**Tantalus monkey** 

At 15:30 we took the 2-hour Kazinga Channel boat cruise from Mweya. Though no new species were seen, I still highly recommend this activity. Large herd of elephants, hippopotamuses and buffalos gathered along the channel for drinking and bathing. Common warthogs and defassa waterbucks were also many. We also saw many birds, Nile crocodiles and a Nile monitor. In addition, there were no better choice of activities at this time of day as it was too hot for game drives.



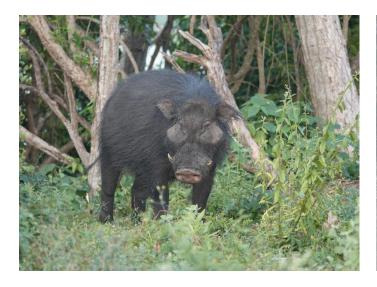


African buffalo and hippopotamus

Hybrid African elephant

Western Uganda is the hybrid zone of African bush elephants and African forest elephants. According to molecular evidence, a large proportion of elephants at Queen Elizabeth National Parks are hybrid, and this had happened for for multiple generations. In my view, the appearance characteristics of African bush elephants were dominant, and some individuals showed some characteristics of African forest elephant.

After the boat cruise we took game drives at the Channel Track and Kasenyi Plains again. At Channel Track, besides the common species, we had a good view of a giant forest hog and a northern bushbuck. It was a pity that due to security reasons related to the Democratic Republic of Congo, night game drives were not allowed at this time. What we could only do was starting early and taking a pre-dawn game drive, and we encountered an African savanna hare. Harriet also saw a genet but we didn't saw it by ourselves.







Northern bushbuck

### June 21st, Queen Elizabeth National Park - Kisoro

In the morning, we took the finally game drive through the Channel Track. Suddenly we heard alarm of a pair of Egyptian geese, and saw a female defassa waterbuck staring at something nervously. However, an African buffalo nearby looked relaxed. All the animals were habituated to tourist vehicles, so definitely there was a dangerous animal. After searching the bush, we found a leopard. This area was called "Leopard Loop", the ideal habitat of leopards. The brave female waterbuck rushed over and drove away the leopard, might protecting her young.

We took a visit to Lake Munyanyange, near the famous Katwe Salt Lake, and saw many lesser flamingos. We could leave the park directly, but Harriet decided to take a detour through the Channel Track again. Thanks to Harriet, we encountered a family of giant forest hogs, including two very cute piglets. The hogs were grazing together with waterbucks. Some hogs tried to challenge waterbucks, but the waterbucks did not mind them.



Leopard Giant forest hog family

We took a 6-hour-long drive, had lunch on the road, and overnighted at Mucha Riverside Lodge, near the two lakes - Lake Mulehe and Lake Mutanda in Kisoro, not far from Mgahinga Gorilla National Park.

### June 22<sup>nd</sup>, Mgahinga Gorilla National Park and Lake Mulehe

We chose Mgahinga instead Bwindi for mountain gorilla tracking, because there are some differences between the two populations. Some scientist thought the Bwindi population should be a separated subspecies, but it has not been widely accepted. Mgahinga Gorilla National Park is located in the Virunga Mountains range, the type locality of mountain gorillas.

There was only one habituated gorilla family for tracking at Mgahinga, the Nyakagezi family, which contained 3 silverbacks, 2 adult females, 1 blackback, 2 juvenile females and 1 baby. This family is famous for multiple adult male tolerance.



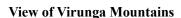


Mountain gorilla silverback

Mountain gorillas

The gorilla tracking took 5 hours in total, including 1 hour with the gorilla family. In the late afternoon, we took a boat on Lake Mulehe to see the resident spotted-necked otters. The lake was also good for bird watching.







**Spotted-necked otters** 

# June 23<sup>rd</sup>, Mgahinga Gorilla National Park - Bwindi Impenetrable National Park

We went to Mgahinga Gorilla National Park again for the golden monkey tracking. The altitude of the monkey location was not high, but it was still a long hike and took 5 hours as well. During the hike, we encountered several northern bushbucks, some individuals were not afraid of humans. The two females we had clear views were both stripes less.





Golden monkeys

Stripes less northern bushbuck

In the afternoon we drove to Ruhija Section of Bwindi Impenetrable National Park. We stayed at Trekkers Tavern Cottages for two nights.

## June 24th, Bwindi Impenetrable National Park

During the daytime, we did both drives and walking for mammal and bird watching. We also visited the Buhoma Section and back to Ruhija. Bule monkeys, eastern black-and-white colobuses, red-tailed monkeys and L'Hoest's monkeys were seen. Bird watching was also good, especially three species of beautiful touracos. We saw at least two black-fronted duikers on a trail at Buhoma. One crossed the trail very closed to us, but when I lifted my camera, it run away in half a second. Then we crouched down and waited in silence by the trailside. Soon, another one appeared not far from us, but turned but into the forest as soon as it noticed us. Therefore, no good photo of the duiker.







Red-tailed monkey





L'Hoest's monkey

Black-fronted duiker

Harriet said the duikers at Ruhija were not so shy, they often feed along the road and there would be no problem to drive passing by them. However, in the dry seasons, the road was too dusty and they could not feed. The rain seasons would be better for watching duikers. We saw rodents crossing the road, and a squirrel on a tree, but too brief to identify the species.

We visited a Pangolin Rescue Centre near Buhoma. The centre rescued pangolins caught by local people in the community area, healed them if they were injured, and sent them into the reserve. During our visit, there was only one rescued white-bellied pangolin. The team had rescued more than 170 pangolins. They also educated local people to raise awareness of pangolin conservation and promote mushroom cultivation and catfish farming to reduce the demand for bushmeat.



Road sigh to Pangolin Rescued Centre



Rescued white-bellied pangolin

We took two night game drives on the road at the edge of Ruhija Section, Bwindi Impenetrable National Park. We used both the spotlight and thermal imager. Harriet also hired an experienced local guide to help us with mammal and bird watching both day and night. Many galagoes were soon, while all individuals clear enough for identifying were spectacled lesser galagoes. We also saw two Lord Derby's scaly-tailed squirrels, some fruit bats (might be Angolan fruit bat) and an African civet on the farm land opposite the forest.



Spectacled lesser galago

Lord Derby's scaly-tailed squirrel



Angolan fruit bat



African civet

# June 25th, Bwindi Impenetrable National Park – Kigali

We departed from Bwindi early in the morning, the local guide showed us a rocky fissure underground near the road. This was the roosting area of the endangered Ruwenzori horseshoe bat. However, most bats were behind the rocks. The only one in the front might be an Angolan fruit bat as well. We also encountered a L'Hoest's monkey near the road. I really want to come back here again for the duiker.





**Bat fissure** 

**Bwindi Impenetrable National Park** 

Entering Rwanda by land border from Uganda was convenient. We flied back home from Kigali International Airport.



Kenya shilling

### Mammal list

|    | Chinese name | English name                       | Scientific name                  |
|----|--------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1  | 黄斑岩蹄兔        | Bush hyrax                         | Heterohyrax brucei               |
| 2  | 非洲草原象        | African savanna elephant           | Loxodonta africana               |
| 3  | 非洲草原象×森林象    | African savanna × forest elephant  | Loxodonta africana × cyclotis    |
| 4  | 东部大猩猩        | Eastern gorilla                    | Gorilla beringei                 |
| 5  | 黑猩猩          | Chimpanzee                         | Pan troglodytes                  |
| 6  | 东黑白疣猴        | Eastern black-and-white colobus    | Colobus guereza                  |
| 7  | 绿狒狒          | Olive baboon                       | Papio anubis                     |
| 8  | 坦塔罗斯绿猴       | Tantalus monkey                    | Chlorocebus tantalus             |
| 9  | 青腹绿猴         | Vervet monkey                      | Chlorocebus pygerythrus          |
| 10 | 白腮猴          | L'Hoest's monkey                   | Allochrocebus lhoesti            |
| 11 | 史氏青长尾猴       | Stuhlmann's blue monkey            | Cercopithecus (mitis) stuhlmanni |
| 12 | 金长尾猴         | Golden monkey                      | Cercopithecus (mitis) kandti     |
| 13 | 红尾长尾猴        | Red-tailed monkey                  | Cercopithecus ascanius           |
| 14 | 扎伊尔婴猴        | Dusky bushbaby                     | Galago matschiei                 |
| 15 | 德比鳞尾松鼠       | Lord Derby's scaly-tailed squirrel | Anomalurus derbianus             |
| 16 | 非洲草原兔        | African savanna hare               | Lepus victoriae                  |
| 17 | 安哥拉果蝠        | Angolan fruit bat                  | Myonycteris angolensis           |
| 18 | 黑背胡狼         | Black-backed jackal                | Lupulella mesomelas              |
| 19 | 斑颈水獭         | Spotted-necked otter               | Hydrictis maculicollis           |
| 20 | 狮            | Lion                               | Panthera leo                     |
| 21 | 豹            | Leopard                            | Panthera pardus                  |
| 22 | 薮猫           | Serval                             | Leptailurus serval               |
| 23 | 猎豹           | Cheetah                            | Acinonyx jubatus                 |
| 24 | 非洲灵猫         | African civet                      | Civettictis civetta              |
| 25 | 斑鬣狗          | Spotted hyena                      | Crocuta crocuta                  |
| 26 | 普通侏獴         | Common dwarf mongoose              | Helogale parvula                 |
| 27 | 白尾獴          | White-tailed mongoose              | Ichneumia albicauda              |
| 28 | <b>编</b> 獴   | Banded mongoose                    | Mungos mungo                     |
| 29 | 平原斑马         | Plains zebra                       | Equus quagga                     |
| 30 | 黑犀           | Black rhinoceros                   | Diceros bicornis                 |
| 31 | 巨林猪          | Giant forest hog                   | Hylochoerus meinertzhageni       |
| 32 | 普通疣猪         | Common warthog                     | Phacochoerus africanus           |
| 33 | 河马           | Hippopotamus                       | Hippopotamus amphibius           |
| 34 | 马赛长颈鹿        | Masai giraffe                      | Giraffa tippelskirchi            |
| 35 | 非洲水牛         | African buffalo                    | Syncerus caffer                  |
| 36 | 北薮羚          | Northern bushbuck                  | Tragelaphus scriptus             |
| 37 | 南非薮羚         | Cape bushbuck                      | Tragelaphus sylvaticus           |
| 38 | 普通大羚羊        | Common eland                       | Taurotragus oryx                 |
| 39 | 黑脸麂羚         | Black-fronted duiker               | Cephalophorus nigrifrons         |
| 40 | 汤氏瞪羚         | Thomson's gazelle                  | Eudorcas thomsonii               |
| 41 | 葛氏瞪羚         | Grant's gazelle                    | Nanger granti                    |
| 42 | 苇羚           | Bohor reedbuck                     | Redunca redunca                  |
| 43 | 赤羚           | Kob                                | Kobus kob                        |
| 44 | 水羚           | Waterbuck                          | Kobus ellipsiprymnus             |
| 45 | 黑斑羚          | Impala                             | Aepyceros melampus               |
| 46 | 转角牛羚         | Topi                               | Damaliscus lunatus               |
| 47 | 柯氏狷羚         | Hartebeest                         | Alcelaphus buselaphus            |
| 48 | 黑尾角马         | Blue wildebeest                    | Connochaetes taurinus            |

### Selected birds – Masai Mara



**Common ostrich** 



Helmeted guineafowl and hamerkop



Harlequin quail



Coqui francolin



Egyptian goose



White-browed coucal



**Black-bellied bustard** 



White-bellied bustard



Yellow-billed stork, grey heron and yellow-billed egret



Hadada ibis



Spur-winged lapwing



Three-banded plover



Secretary bird



White-backed vulture



Lappet-faced Vulture and long-legged buzzard



Dark chanting goshawk



Southern ground hornbill



**Lilac-breasted Roller** 



**Grey-backed fiscal** 

Northern black flycatcher







**Superb starling** 

Rüppell's starling





Rufous-tailed weaver

Baglafecht weaver

### Selected birds - Mabamba Bay Swamp



Spur-winged goose and white-faced whistling duck



Long-toed lapwing



Squacco heron



Malachite kingfisher



Pied kingfisher



Shoebill





African wattled lapwing

Verreaux's eagle-owl

# **Selected birds – Queen Elizabeth National Park (Channel Track)**



**Crested francolin** 



Red-necked spurfowl



Long-crested eagle



**Double-toothed barbet** 





Black-headed weaver

Speckled mousebird

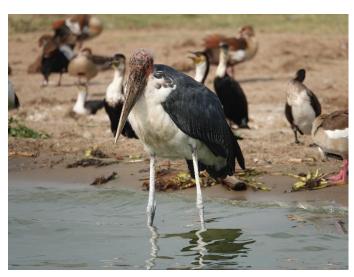
# Selected birds – Queen Elizabeth National Park (Kazinga Channel)



African skimmer



Reed cormorant



Marabou stork



African jacana



Goliath heron



Great white pelican and white-breasted cormorant



Grey-headed kingfisher



African fish eagle

# Selected birds – Queen Elizabeth National Park (Main Road side)



Grey crowned crane



Cinnamon-chested bee-eater

# Selected birds – Queen Elizabeth National Park (Salt Lakes)





Lesser flamingo

**Black-winged stilt** 

#### Selected birds – Lake Mulehe



Yellow-billed duck



Pink-backed pelican



African openbill, African spoonbill and African sacred ibis



Swamp flycatcher

# Selected birds – Bwindi Impenetrable National Park





**Great blue turaco** 



Black-billed turaco



Ross's turaco



**Crested barbet** 



Red-tailed bristlebill



African paradise flycatcher



**Bwindi Impenetrable National Park** 

# Reptiles



Mwanza flat-headed rock agama



Uganda blue-headed tree agama



**Rudis chameleon** 



Johnston's three-horned chameleon



Nile crocodile by the Mara River

#### Acknowledgement

During the Kenya part, we traveled with **Natural World Kenya Safaris**, a large local tour agency that provided good service and affordable price. <a href="https://www.naturaltoursandsafaris.com/">https://www.naturaltoursandsafaris.com/</a> Great thanks to our guide and driver David and Julius, and Esther helping us with logistics.

During the Uganda part, we traveled with **Harrier Tours**, founded by Harriet Kemigisha, expert of wildlife and conservation in Uganda, whom many friends of mammalwatching.com had travel with. <a href="https://harriertours.com/">https://harriertours.com/</a> Great thanks to Harriet and our driver Elias, and many local guides sorry I did not remember their name.