

Second Annual Gorilla Naming and Fundraising Ceremony

“Rwanda’s Mountain Gorilla: Celebrating an International Treasure”

Rwanda is home to around one third of the 700 mountain gorillas left in the world and for several decades now, the country has been at the forefront of gorilla conservation. The endangered mountain gorilla still survives in the Virunga Mountains, a mountain chain linking Rwanda to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda. The species survives mainly thanks to the renewed efforts of not only the national authorities and the local populations of the three countries, but also the international community.

Gorillas play an essential role in contributing to the positive image of Rwanda and act as ambassadors on the international scene by raising the profile of the country. They also contribute greatly to Rwanda’s tourism industry which ranks third in terms of foreign currency generation. The industry is a fundamental engine for the growth of the national economy and is driven by the mountain gorillas which have been, and remain, the main attraction in Rwanda, bringing in over 20,000 visitors to the country each year.

Rwanda has enthusiastically received thousands of international visitors and appreciates the revenues generated through gorilla tourism. Aside from this, Rwanda has also relied on the international community in ensuring the long-term survival of the gorillas. Over the years, several international conservation organizations and donors have made substantial human and financial resources available and continue to do so. The Office for Rwandan Tourism and National Parks (ORTPN) and the country at large recognize this effort. In order to fulfill its mandate of supporting the tourism industry as well as protecting and conserving the country’s national parks, however, ORTPN needs to increase its revenues. In order to broaden the support base for conservation in Rwanda, ORTPN is reaching out to both Rwandan and international partners in a celebration of Rwanda’s mountain gorilla.

Recognizing the Role of the International Community

Rwanda’s tourism industry has been steadily growing over the past five years and this growth has allowed the tourism industry to be on target towards its vision of 70,000 tourists in 2010. Such growth in tourism, if responsibly managed, can be significant tool for conservation as well. The link between ecotourism, conservation, responsible tourism and community participation is what drove Rwanda to choose ecotourism as its main focus in developing its tourism product.

The international community has played a significant role in the growth of Rwanda tourism. In 2005 Rwanda received 22,670 tourists from 95 different countries. These international tourists have contributed both to the growth of gorilla tourism and to the country’s conservation efforts that are strongly supported by gorilla tourism. In addition, international celebrities have been encouraging, and are participating in the conservation of this rare species. Such global attention to the protection of Rwanda’s mountain gorilla has created a permanent bond between Rwanda and the world.

Rwanda’s Second Annual Gorilla Naming Ceremony

As a means to conserve and protect the region where the mountain gorillas live, ORTPN, along with local communities and members of Rwanda’s Private Sector, identified sustainability projects

which could help the region. On June 25th 2005, ORTPN held its first Gorilla Naming and Fundraising Ceremony. The fundraising effort was designed to raise money for identified priority projects which are currently in the implementation phase.

On Saturday, June 17th 2006, ORTPN is hosting the Second Annual Gorilla Naming Ceremony. At this event, names will be given to 12 mountain gorillas at the Volcanoes National Park in Ruhengeri. The ceremony will be an opportunity to recognize and reward international tourists and conservation supporters who have visited and continue to visit the country and the great role that they have played in conserving the gorillas through gorilla tourism.

The top five countries bringing tourists and contributing to conservation in Rwanda will be recognized on that day for their role in promoting Rwanda as a tourism destination and ensuring the protection of the mountain gorillas as well as playing a part in the development of the country as a whole.

Overall, the Gorilla Naming campaign is aimed at ensuring the future of Rwanda's mountain gorillas and will provide an opportunity for all those who care about the mountain gorillas to contribute to this common effort.

The Gorilla Naming Ceremony in Volcanoes National Park, Kinigi:

On Saturday, June 17th 2006, names will be given to 12 new mountain gorillas at the Volcanoes National Park in Ruhengeri. ORTPN is pleased to add that once again, the Guest of Honour will be His Excellency, President Paul Kagame. The event will take part in the morning, beginning at 9am and will include entertainment, a showcase of gorilla- and community-related projects as well as the main event in which members of the international community will have the opportunity to name the latest additions to Rwanda's mountain gorilla family.

The following elements will make this event very special:

- The week before, all eyes will be on the region surrounding the Parc National des Volcans, home to the mountain gorilla population in Rwanda, potentially generating investment opportunities designed to benefit the local community;
- The town of Musanze will be alive with activity as it prepares to host crowds of people for the second public gorilla naming ceremony;
- The international community as well as the local community through their representatives, will take a lead role in the Gorilla Naming Ceremony;
- The naming ceremony will be a lively and emotional occasion with 12 gorillas awarded their names on that day;
- After the ceremony everyone will be free to enjoy the party atmosphere with traditional music and dancing.

The Ongoing Gorilla Conservation Campaign:

Last year Rwanda launched an ongoing fundraising and adoption campaign to ensure the future of mountain gorilla population. Continuing on in 2006, the Second Annual Gorilla Naming Ceremony will focus more its attention towards adoption opportunities:

The Adoption Opportunities

Adoption opportunities will not be exclusive and perennial but will provide a chance for sponsors to develop a relationship with selected primates

- Four Adoption Categories are available as follows:
 - Bronze Category - investment of \$5,000 or more
 - Silver Category - investment of \$15,000 or more
 - Gold Category - investment of \$25,000 or more
 - Platinum Category - investment of \$50,000 or more

Why would sponsors be interested in adopting gorillas?

By entering one of the Adoption Categories, a Sponsor will seek the following interests:

Contribution to conservation and development of national economy: the Sponsor will show his/her commitment to the fate of mountain gorillas as an endangered flagship species, and will effectively contribute to the growth of Rwanda's national economy

Marketing tool (publicity, logo, branding...): many companies already use gorillas in their names, logos or advertisement campaigns, acknowledging the contribution of gorillas to their marketing strategies. Adoption of a mountain gorilla allows such companies to fulfill the moral obligation of ensuring the long-term survival of mountain gorillas

Company profile (prestige): as a high-profile species immediately associated with the image of Rwanda, mountain gorillas offer a unique symbol which directly contributes to the prestige of the company.

Package of benefits: by joining one of the adoption programmes, a sponsor will benefit from a number of advantages as follows:

- All our Patrons will receive a gorilla pin and a certificate recognizing their significant contribution in Bronze, Silver, Gold, or Platinum categories.
- The sponsors in all categories will be officially recognized on the ORTPN's web site for a year.
- The sponsor can use the name and the pictures of the adopted gorilla for promotion and publicity purposes¹. This will be for 1 year, 2 years, 3 years and 5 years for Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum Category respectively. International branding is only permitted for Platinum Category.
- The sponsors will have the right to set up their promotion material on the spot during the day of the Naming Ceremony.
- For adoption, only Platinum category will be granted the right for exclusivity of individual gorilla.
- The twins in Susa group falls into the Platinum category and their adoption will be worth at least USD\$1,000,000.

¹ The use of gorillas for publicity has to follow a number of ethical rules (positive image of gorillas, contribution to conservation, etc.) and be subject by Terms and Conditions according to the national law and be endorsed by ORTPN on a case-by-case basis.