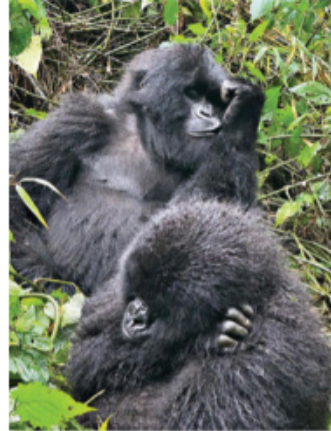


Letter from the Editor



Clockwise from left: Jacqui and her husband, Rob, gorilla trekking in Rwanda's Volcanoes National Park; huddling to stay warm; pool time at One&Only Gorilla's Nest; breakfast at Singita Kwitonda Lodge; Jacqui and her son, Bobby, brave the Canopy Walkway at Nyungwe National Park.

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HEN YOU COME face-to-face with a silverback gorilla in Rwanda's Volcanoes National Park, the last thing you are thinking about are words like *sustainability* or *conservation*. You are mostly contemplating how much the animal weighs (about 400 pounds) and what it eats (plants, whew). And that you are very small.

In the early 1980s, Africa's mountain gorillas were almost gone, their population decimated by poaching and deforestation. But naturalist Dian Fossey—who was not an advocate for gorilla tourism, it is worth noting—brought them back from the brink. The

animals now number around 400 in Volcanoes National Park; visitors pay \$1,500 each for permits (which are capped at 96 per day). These funds support the park and its staff, as well as the farmers whose properties border the area. In recent years, world-class hotels like the lushly forested **One&Only Gorilla's Nest** (*doubles from \$4,200, all-inclusive*) and the intimate **Singita Kwitonda Lodge** (*doubles from \$2,470 per person, all-inclusive*) have opened on the outskirts of the park, bringing much-needed jobs and revenue to the region.

Gorilla trekking represents ecotourism at its most privileged, because of the cost, and most elemental, because of the emotion it elicits. On my trek this past fall, I saw the silverback of the Muhoza family—a giant adult male I'll call "Dad"—bark at two teenagers to quit fighting, while "Mom" tucked a little one under her massive arm, shielding it from the rain. Gorillas: they're just like us.

The stories in this issue—including our annual Global Vision Awards, which highlight organizations working toward a healthier planet—touch on a range of destinations and experiences. You'll learn about places that are fragile but becoming stronger, thanks to ambitious efforts such as those I saw in Rwanda. I hope you, like me, come back from an adventure reaffirmed that our planet is indeed a strange, thrilling place worth protecting.

FROM MY TRAVELS

To navigate Rwanda, you need the help of a travel advisor. Mark Lakin, founder of the **Legacy Untold** (ml@thelegacyuntold.com), planned our trip. He stressed that we had to see Akagera National Park, which, thanks to rewilding efforts, is now home to the Big Five. We stayed at the rustic but comfortable **Wilderness Magashi Camp** (*doubles from \$912 per person, all-inclusive*), which has eight tented, solar-powered rooms. Upon our arrival, our eagle-eyed guide, Herman Nkusi, pointed to a leopard in a tree, flicking its tail. Over the next two days we saw a battle-scarred

hippo cavorting on land; a bull elephant in his prime; and a mother rhino with her baby, strolling near a lake at sunset.

We also loved our time at **One&Only Nyungwe House** (*doubles from \$2,200, all-inclusive*), near the border of Nyungwe National Park, which was recently named a UNESCO World Heritage site. The 22-room hotel, which sits on a vast tea plantation, provides a plush base from which to go chimpanzee trekking in the nearby park, one of the oldest rainforests in Africa. Chimp trekking is no joke: my husband, Rob, and I slogged through mud, over rows of fire ants, and up steep hills, legs shaking from the effort. But we found those elusive chimps, swinging from the branches with unfathomable grace.

Jacqui Gifford

@jacquigiff
@jacquigiff