

Mountain Gorillas, Parc National des Volcans, Rwanda

Read *Gorillas in the Mist*, the wonderful book by Dian Fossey who carried out most of her research here, try to get some sleep, meet the rangers in the morning, listen to their instructions carefully, join the small group of fellow trekkers and head off with high anticipation and overflowing adrenalin along the muddy and sometimes slippery switchback trails up through the lush, damp, sometimes misty, forest on the slopes of the Virunga Mountains in Volcanoes National Park, Rwanda. One to five hours later, the guides, having spoken on their radios to the trackers who have been out since dawn, will stop. The troop is near and more often than not the first one to emerge from the undergrowth will be the biggest, the magnificent silverback, and visitors seeing him for the first time will more likely than not stand open-mouthed in awe ... not in fright ... at his huge domed head, massive shoulders, great bare chest and peaceful all-consuming presence, just a few paces away. Then his family will appear and the allotted hour with Mountain Gorillas will pass in what seems like seconds, the most awesome wildlife experience will be over and a visitor's life may have changed for ever.