

Best Bucket List Trips for Your Lifetime: Face to Face With Gorillas



Excerpted from an article by Larry Olmsted

Trekking With Gorillas

Why? Of all the wonderful wildlife safari experiences out there, this is the one that gets you up closest with some of the world's most magnificent creatures. Usually you view wildlife, from polar bears to lions to elephants, from vehicles, but in this case you hike to the gorillas and meet them on foot, in their world, on their terms, very, very close up. It is an emotionally moving experience, but it's also one of the more strenuous forms of wildlife viewing, as it can require several hours of hiking, uphill and often through very dense foliage. For that reason, this is one that should not be put off for too long, as you will be required to have a certain level of fitness and mobility in order to participate.

Michael Holtz is the founder and President of [SmartFlyer](#), one of the world's leading luxury travel agencies, a member of the acclaimed [Virtuoso consortium of top firms](#), with offices around the world. He has handled every imaginable kind of travel and trip for his clients, but when I asked him to pick one Bucket List entry, he chose Gorilla Trekking in the Mountains of Rwanda.



“My thoughts are, first, Rwanda.” He explained that he brought his ten top producing advisors there last March for a company retreat of sorts. “Waking up at 6AM and doing an 8K hike thru mud to see a family of gorillas living in the wild. We got to spend 40 minutes with them, and one actually swiped by one of us, as our hearts pounded quicker than ever. We then came down and relaxed in African Bush Baths at One & Only Gorillas Nest Resort.”

I've done this trip, love all things Africa, wildlife and safari and have to concur with Holtz - it is truly epic and very unique.

Where? Just about all of the world's surviving mountain gorillas live in Rwanda, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The latter is not currently an especially safe place. Uganda is less expensive and appeals more to budget travelers, though because of high demand and very limited permits, trekking with gorillas is never cheap.

Who to Use? **There are a lot of good African safari travel specialists, but to me, without a doubt, the best is Micato Safaris.** This multi-generational family owned business has been doing it very well for a very long time, has full-time staff and offices in Africa, owns its own vehicles and does not subcontract like many tour operators, and most of all, they have all the insider connections to ensure a great experience. As a result, Micato has won every major award in the travel industry - they were rated the World's Best Safari Outfitter 9-times by *Travel + Leisure* magazine alone.