

Gorilla Trekking Clothing & Gear Checklist

Everything you need to wear and carry for a safe, comfortable trek

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WEAR: Khaki | Olive | Brown | Muted Green | Grey | Tan

AVOID: Black | Dark Blue | White | Red | Orange | Bright Patterns

01 UPPER BODY

- Long-sleeved technical shirt — neutral colour (khaki, olive, brown, muted green or grey)
- Lightweight synthetic fleece or merino wool midlayer for cold morning starts and the encounter stop
- Packable rain poncho or waterproof rain jacket — neutral colour preferred (no bright yellow or red)

02 LOWER BODY

- Lightweight, quick-drying long trousers — neutral colour, NOT cotton
- Tuck trouser legs into sock tops at the ankle (best defence against safari ants)
- Thermal base layer / leggings for Ruhija or Nkuringo sectors (higher altitude, colder mornings)
- Gaiters — optional but useful in wet season or muddy conditions

03 FOOTWEAR

- Mid-cut, waterproof, ankle-supporting hiking boots with aggressive lug soles
- Boots MUST be broken in before arrival — do not open the box for the first time at the lodge
- Moisture-wicking hiking socks — wool or synthetic, minimum two pairs
- Camp shoes or sandals for the lodge (boots need to dry between consecutive trek days)

Footwear is the most important equipment decision on this list.

Trail runners and casual shoes are inadequate for Bwindi's terrain. The combination of wet clay, exposed roots, and steep gradients demands proper ankle support and an aggressive lug sole. Nkuringo and Ruhija sectors are especially unforgiving on inadequate footwear.

04 HANDS AND HEAD

- Lightweight gardening gloves with grip texture on palm
- Wide-brimmed hat or buff / neck gaiter
- Buff or balaclava for cold mornings at Ruhija / Nkuringo
- Face mask (required if any respiratory symptoms on trek day)

05 DAY PACK ESSENTIALS

- Minimum 2 litres of water (hydration bladder ideal)
- High-energy snacks — nuts, dried fruit, energy bars
- Camera or phone (flash DISABLED before leaving lodge)
- Spare memory cards and charged power bank
- Dry sack or waterproof bag for electronics
- Personal medication and small first aid kit
- Gorilla permit documentation (personal backup copy)
- Face mask (spare)
- Insect repellent with DEET — applied before departure
- Sunscreen for exposed skin
- Rain poncho if not wearing it as outerwear
- Light fleece / midlayer (if not already wearing it)

06 WHAT TO LEAVE BEHIND

- ✗ Black, dark blue, white, red or orange clothing
- ✗ High-contrast patterns or bright logos
- ✗ Cotton trousers or base layers
- ✗ New boots worn for the first time on trek day
- ✗ Open-toed shoes, sandals or flat-soled footwear
- ✗ Strong perfume, cologne or heavily scented products
- ✗ Camouflage / military-pattern clothing (check at briefing)
- ✗ Food or drink to consume during the gorilla encounter

Important Note on Insect Repellent

Apply DEET-based repellent at your lodge BEFORE departure — not at the gate immediately before entering the forest. Allow the repellent to fully absorb into the skin so that any strong chemical scent has dissipated before you are in close proximity to the gorilla family. Heavy synthetic fragrance applied moments before the encounter can disturb habituated gorillas in the same way strong perfume does. Apply early, let it settle, and do not reapply during the encounter itself. For maximum protection, consider clothing pre-treated with permethrin spray, which reduces the need for skin-applied repellent during the trek.

Hire a porter. Available at all Bwindi sectors and at Mgahinga for \$20 to \$30, paid directly to the porter at the gate. A lighter body with free hands moves more safely on difficult terrain — and the income goes directly into the community.

Read More Before You Go

What to expect on the trek day gorillahikeuganda.com/gorilla-trekking-experience

Is gorilla trekking safe? gorillahikeuganda.com/is-gorilla-trekking-safe

How long does trekking take? gorillahikeuganda.com/how-long-does-gorilla-trekking-take

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