

# EAST AFRICA **TOURISM PLATFORM**

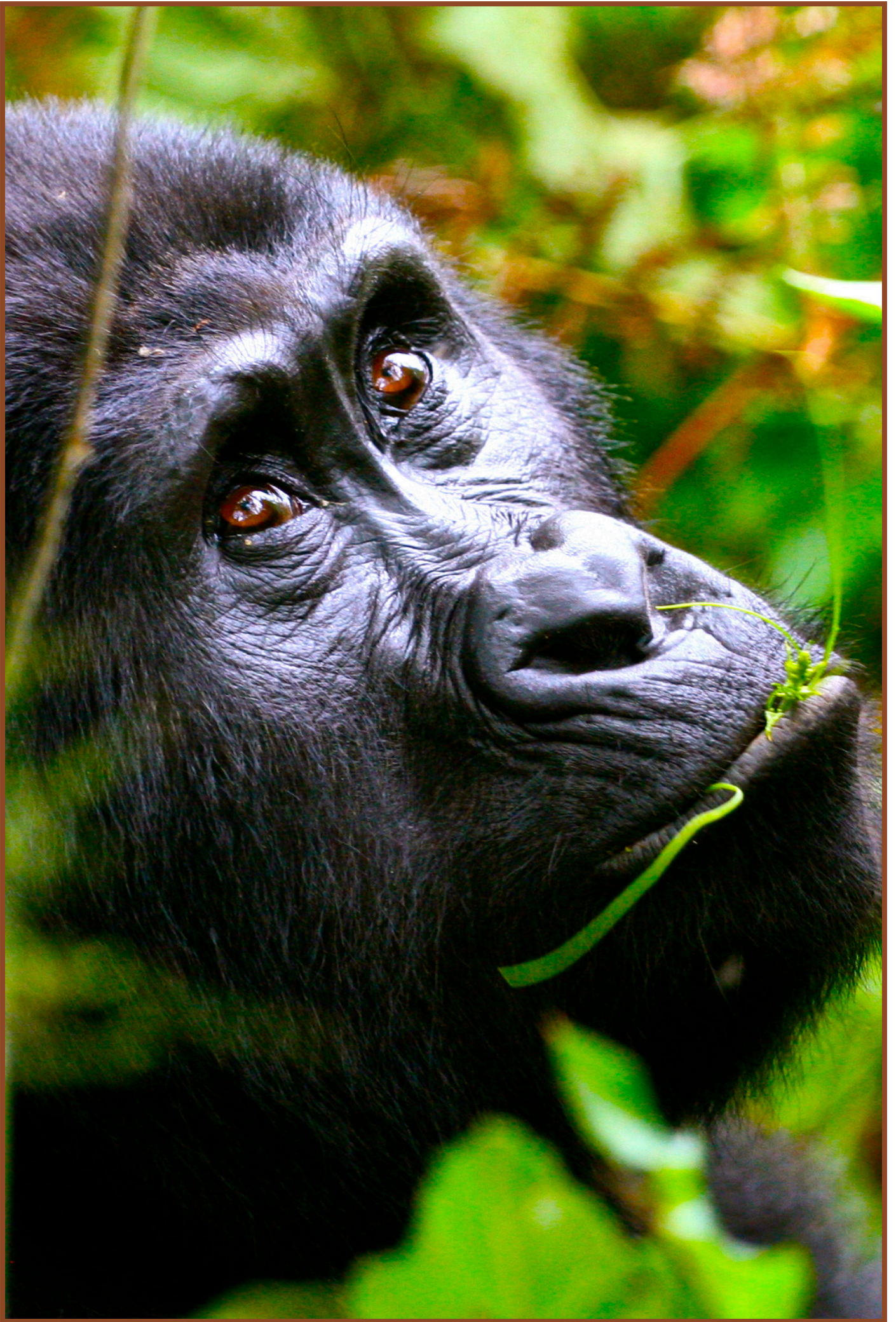
## INCREMENT OF **GORILLA PERMITS** IN RWANDA

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Nairobi, May 12, 2017









# LET'S NOT KILL THE GOOSE THAT LAYS THE GOLDEN EGG

## INTRODUCTION

- The struggle to conserve wildlife is real. Conservationists are faced with the ever imminent threat of poaching and illegal trade in wildlife products.
- In this century, wildlife conservation, tourism development and community well-being are more inter-twinned and none can survive without the other. Therefore, managing the interface between tourism development, conservation of wildlife as a tourism resource and the needs of local inhabitants residing near wildlife tourism areas should be given first priority among policymakers.
- Mountain gorillas are endangered species with approximately 880 individuals remaining in the wild particularly spread between Uganda and Rwanda.
- While the goals of conservation and exceptional visitor experience are noble; we caution that implementation of 100% increase (US\$750-1500) in gorilla tracking permit fees may, in the short-term, be counterproductive.
- Gorilla tracking costs between US\$ 600 in Uganda and US\$ 1500 in Rwanda.
- We acknowledge Rwanda's niche tourism strategy, stringent conservation measures and commitment to community development around Volcanoes, Nyungwe and Akagera National Parks. With the reintroduction of the black rhinos, Rwanda continues to demonstrate their commitment to develop their tourism sector through product diversification with a strong focus on conservation.
- However, we need to strike a balance between conservation and tourism. Conservation depends on tourism revenue to succeed.
- Increasing of permit fees prompts a number of pertinent questions: With US\$1500, are we able to generate sufficient demand from within domestic and regional markets? How many East Africans will afford and be willing to pay? What are the consequences of this price hike on tourist demand and the entire tourism value chain? Will gorilla tracking be price competitive anymore? What effect will price hike have on Rwandan, Kenyan and Ugandan tour operators selling multi-country packages?
- As the region, we need to safeguard ourselves against uncertainties of seasonality. We need to consider domestic and regional markets while pricing our products.

## PARTING SHOT

- As East Africa Tourism Platform, we call upon the Chamber of Tourism and Rwanda Development Board, among other stakeholders to continue with the dialogue and help seek the most appropriate approach to raising conservation revenue, improving product quality and empowering local communities.
- On the other hand, as the region we cannot afford to put all our eggs in one basket. We need to diversify our tourism markets. International tourism has proved to be susceptible to global market dynamics, such as travel advisories, terror attacks and seasonality. Drawing lessons from Kenya, Uganda, domestic and regional tourism is highly resilient and holds a lot of potential for the development of East Africa. We cannot ignore these markets. We need to sustainably invest in them.



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### EAST AFRICA TOURISM PLATFORM

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