

Uganda  
-  
AFRIKA  
V MALEM







SREDI NARODNEGA PARKA MURCHISON FALLS, KI VELJA ZA ENEGA IZMED TURISTIČNO NAJBOLJ OBLEGANIH V UGANDI, SE ZAPLETEM V POGOVOR S STAREJŠIM NIZOZEMSKIM PAROM. Z OČBUJDOJČIM ZANIMANJEM SE NAVDUŠUJEM NAD PRIPOVEDMI O VSEH NJUNIH PREPOTOVANIH DRŽAVAH V SKLOPU PODSAHARSKE AFRIKE IN Z VESELJEM SPOZNAM, DA JE BILA MOJA ODLOČITEV ZA POTOVANJE V TO MANJ POZNANO DEŽELO, BREZ KANČKA DVOMA, PRAVILNA. PRAVITA NAMREČ, DA JE UGANDA DRŽAVA, KJER NAJHITREJE SPOZNAŠ VSO RAZNOLIKOST AFRIŠKEGA KONTINENTA – MANJKAJO JI ZGOLJ SAHARSKE SIPINE. V PRIMERJAVI S SOSEDNJIMA KENIJO IN TANZANIJO JE MANJ TURISTIČNA IN POSLEDIČNO TUDI CENOVNO UGODNEJŠA. DOMAČA TURISTIČNA ORGANIZACIJA JE S SLOGANOM »BISER AFRIKE« POVSSEM UPRAVIČILA POIMENOVANJE UGANDE.

Večina tujih obiskovalcev usmeri svoje potovanje po Ugandi v najbolj prepoznavne turistične kraje, a ker so največje lepote velikokrat skrite, sva se z možem odločila za raziskovanje odročnejših kotičkov. Vožnja z najetim terenskim vozilom po slabih, neoznačenih in luknjastih cestah nama je vedno znova postregla z nenavadnimi prizori. Rdečkasto peščenih cest ni bilo videti konca, a prav zaradi njih nisva Afrike le opazovala, ampak tudi čutila in vonjala. Rdeč prah naju je na trenutke božal, spet drugič rezal v nosnice.

Na sušnem severovzhodnem delu Ugande sva naletela na majhne tradicionalne vasice, v katerih dobi človek občutek, da se je čas ustavil. Ljudstvo Karamojong, ki živi na tem področju, obišče le malo popotni-

kov, zato so domačini toliko bolj navdušeni nad vsakim obiskovalcem bele polti, ki se znajde v njihovem svetu. Mogočnost divje in prostrane narave se tu srečuje s človeško prvobitnostjo. Slabo oblečeni in bosí otroci pomagajo svojim staršem pri raznih opravilih. Iz več kilometrov oddaljenega vodnjaka prinašajo v velikih plastičnih kantah domov vodo ali iščejo dračje, ki jim služi za pripravo skromnega vsakdanjega obroka in kot kurjava za hladne afriške večere, saj so vasi brez elektrike. V času najinega obiska se je le nekaj otrok pred hišami brezskrbno igralo. Namesto »pravih« igrač uporabljajo razne kamenčke, prazne zračnice ter kepo raztrganih in odsluženih oblačil, povito v nekakšno doma narejeno žogo.

Kljub pomanjkanju povsem osnovnih življenjskih dobrin so bili vaščani







videti zadovoljni. Vedno znova so nama ob poti navdušeno mahali, podarjali široke nasmehi, prijazne besede in poglede. V svoje skromne domove, kjer na le nekaj kvadratnih metrih živi tudi po deset ali več ljudi, so naju sprejeli z odprtimi rokami. Njihova preprosta dejanja so nama vedno znova postregla z najosnovnejšimi življenjskimi lekcijami in načeli, ki jih je naš način življenja skoraj že povsem pozabil. Odkritost in gostoljubnost tukaj res še ne poznata cene.

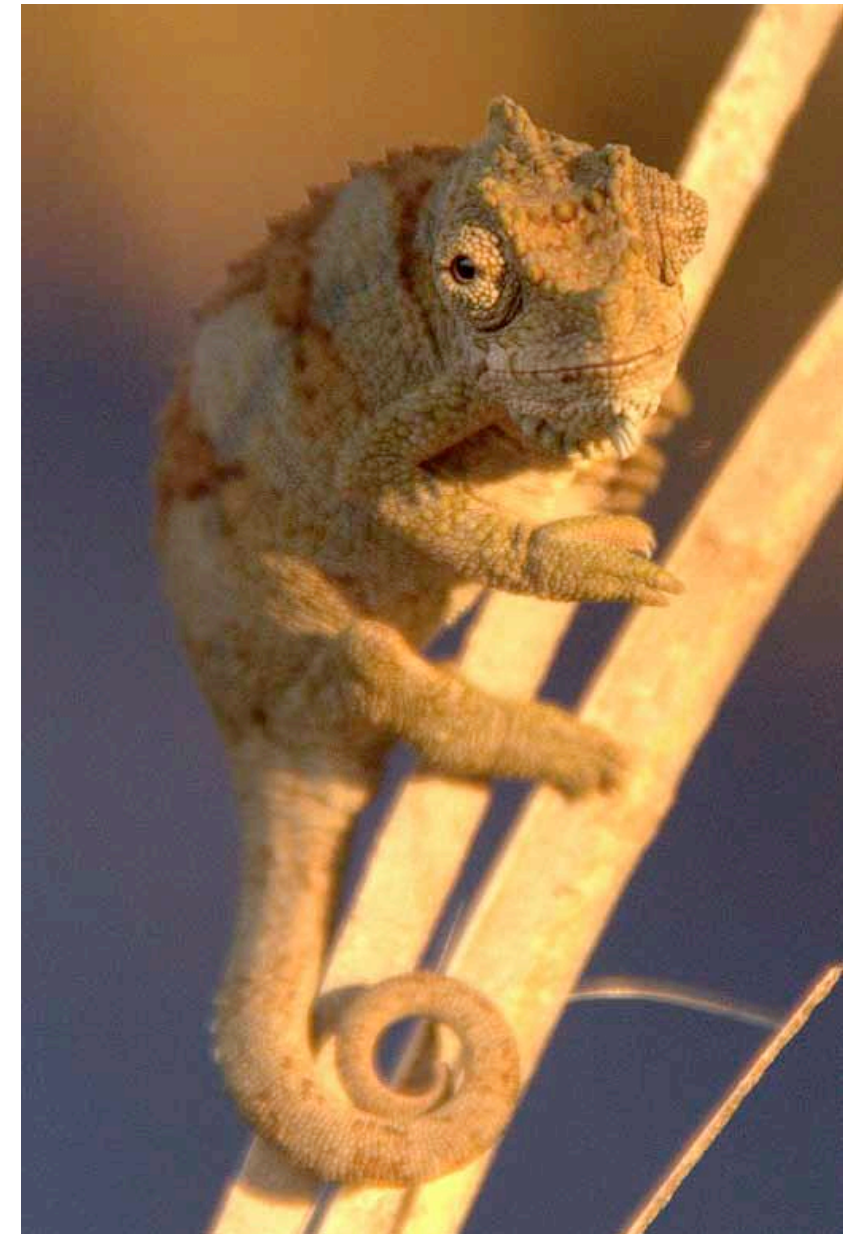
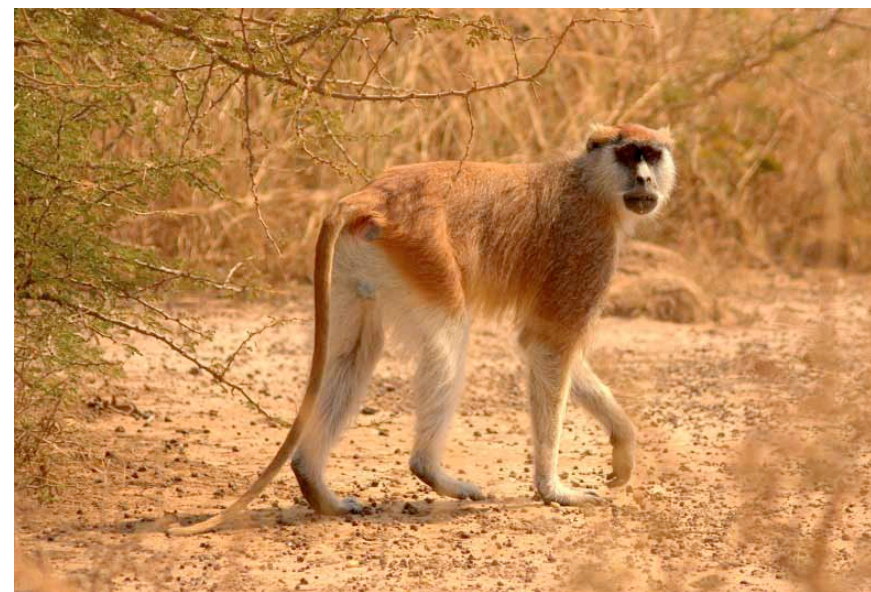
Povsem drugačen svet pa spoznamo v narodnih parkih, kamor prihaja večina turistov. Obiščejo jih zaradi narave, ki se bohoti v vsej svoji veličini in skupaj z žgočim soncem, ki se pne tik nad ekvatorjem, ustvarja neverjetne afriške prizore. Rdeča prst, pomešana z zlato rumeno savansko travo, palme ob rekah in bogastvo raznolikih živalskih vrst ustvarjajo svojevrsten svet. Med znamenitih »velikih pet«, ki jih najdemo v tukajšnjih parkih, so uvrščeni levi, sloni, bivoli, leopardi in nosorogi. Slednji so v Ugandi žal že leta 1982 povsem izginili. Do zadnjega so jih namreč iztrebili divji lovci v času režima Idi Amina. Leta 2001 so prav zaradi oživitve izumrle vrste odprli zanje posebno zavetišče. V prihodnosti naj bi te mogočne tritonske živali spet zaživele v svojem naravnem okolju.

Uganda je tudi dežela, bogata z vodnimi viri. Zaradi burnega tekton-

skega dogajanja v preteklosti se to vodno bogastvo zadržuje v številnih kraterskih jezerih. Eno najbolj znanih in obiskanih – jezero Bunyonyi – se nahaja na jugu države. Tudi do tja naju je pripeljala pot in pogled nanj in njegove številčne otočke nama je nudil izjemo doživetje, še posebno ob prvih jutranjih žarkih.

Občudovala sva najdaljšo reko na svetu Nil in največje afriško jezero Viktorijo, ki sta vzrok za bujno rastje v okolici in posledično za raznoliko ponudbo sadja in zelenjave na lokalnih tržnicah. Čudila sva se domačinom, ki se kljub nevarnosti nilskih povodnih konjev in krokodilov ter možnosti okužbe z bilharzijo, črvastim parazitom, ki povzroča neprijetne zdravstvene težave, kopajo tako v reki kot jezeru.

Spoznala sva, da čeprav je po prihodkih na prebivalca, ki znašajo manj kot 120 EUR na mesec, Uganda ena najrevnejših držav na svetu, vendarle bogata na način, ki se ne more meriti v denarju. Naravna in kulturna raznolikost predstavljata ogromen turistični potencial, ki lahko s pravo razvojno strategijo prinese državi spremembe. S spoznanji in modrostmi, ki sva jih odkrivala na poti, pa je država pravi biser tudi za vse tiste avanturistične popotnike, ki znajo gledati na svet z odprtimi očmi in srcem.



## UGANDA AFRICA IN MINIATURE

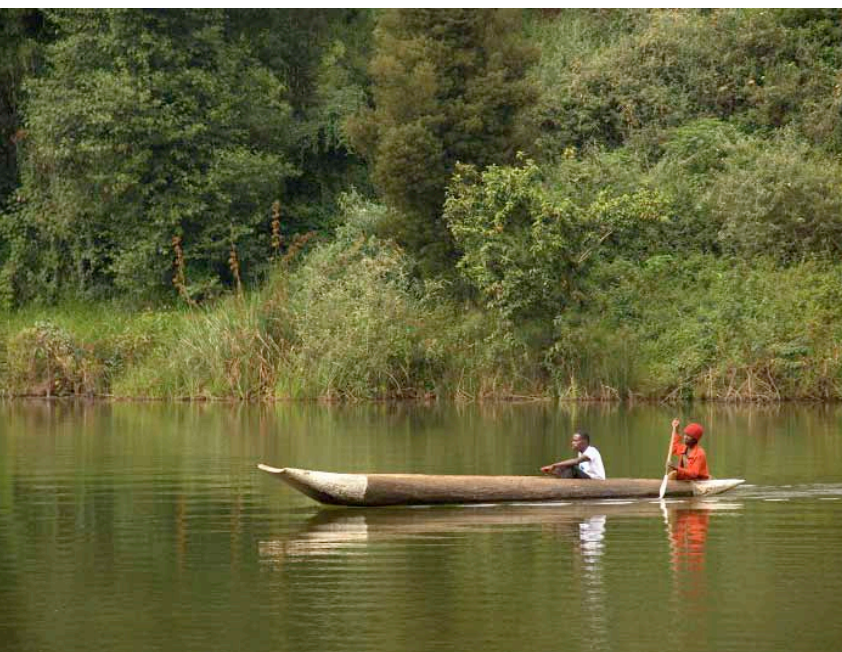
TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHS: NINA KOGEJ

*IN THE MIDDLE OF THE MURCHISON FALLS NATIONAL PARK, ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR TOURIST DESTINATIONS IN UGANDA, I FALL INTO CONVERSATION WITH AN ELDERLY DUTCH COUPLE. WITH WONDERING ADMIRATION, I LISTEN ENTHUSIASTICALLY TO THEIR TALES ABOUT ALL THE COUNTRIES THEY HAVE VISITED IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA AND REALISE, WITH HAPPINESS, THAT MY DECISION TO TRAVEL TO THIS LITTLE KNOWN COUNTRY WAS, WITHOUT A SHADOW OF A DOUBT, THE RIGHT ONE. THEY TELL ME, IN FACT, THAT UGANDA IS THE BEST COUNTRY IN WHICH TO DISCOVER ALL THE DIVERSITY OF THE AFRICAN CONTINENT – ALL THAT IS MISSING ARE THE SAHARAN SAND DUNES. UGANDA HAS A LESS DEVELOPED TOURISM INDUSTRY THAN NEIGHBOURING KENYA AND TANZANIA AND IS CONSEQUENTLY A CHEAPER COUNTRY TO VISIT. WITH ITS SLOGAN "THE PEARL OF AFRICA", THE NATIONAL TOURISM BOARD HAS HIT UPON THE PERFECT NAME FOR UGANDA.*

*Most foreign visitors to Uganda head for the best-known tourist destinations, but since the most beautiful sights are often hidden from view, my husband and I decided to explore some of the country's more out-of-the-way corners. Travelling in our hired 4x4 along poor roads – unmarked and full of holes – we were continually rewarded with unusual scenes. The sandy red roads stretched on endlessly into the distance, but thanks to them we did not only observe Africa, we also felt it and smelled it. At times the red dust caressed us. Other times it seared our nostrils.*

*In Uganda's dry north-eastern region we came across traditional little villages in which we got the feeling that time had stopped. The Karamojong people, who live in this region, see few travellers, so the villagers are all the more enthusiastic about every white-skinned visitor who enters their world. Here the vast and mighty wilderness meets the original essence of humanity. Scantily clad, barefoot children help their parents with various chores. They carry water home in plastic jerrycans from a well several kilometres away, or search for the brushwood that serves as firewood to prepare their meagre daily mail or to provide heat on the cold African evenings, for the villages have no electricity. We saw few children playing outside the houses during our visit. Instead of "real" toys, they use stones and pebbles, old inner tubes and a home-made ball made from tightly wrapped strips of old clothing.*





*Despite the lack of even the barest of necessities, the villagers appeared to be satisfied with their lot. Time and again they would wave enthusiastically at us from the side of the road, smiling broadly and greeting us with friendly words and glances. They welcomed us with open arms into their humble homes, where ten or more people live crowded together in just a few square metres of space. Their simple actions continually reminded us of some of life's most basic lessons and principles – which our way of life has almost entirely forgotten. Here openness and hospitality really have no price.*

*The world we discover in the national parks, where most of the tourists go, could not be more different. People come here because of the magnificent nature, which together with the burning sun, as it rises just above the equator, creates spectacular African scenery. The red dust, mixed with the golden-yellow savannah grass, the palm trees lining the rivers and the wealth of diverse animal species, combine to form a unique world. Uganda's national parks are also home to the famous "big five": lion, elephant, buffalo, leopard and rhinoceros. Sadly, the last of these species disappeared from Uganda in 1982. The rhino population was entirely wiped out by poachers during the regime of Idi Amin. A special rhino sanctuary was opened in 2001 in an attempt to reintroduce the species. In the future, it is hoped that these mighty three-tonne animals will once again be able to roam in their natural environment.*

*Uganda is also rich in water resources. As a result of tectonic turbulence in the distant past, these precious resources can be found in numerous crater lakes. One of the most famous and most visited of these – Lake Bunyonyi – lies in the south of the country. Our travels also took us there, and the lake and its many islands proved to be a remarkable sight, especially when lit by the first rays of the morning sun.*

*We also marvelled at the world's longest river, the Nile, and Africa's largest lake – Victoria – which together are responsible for the luxuriant vegetation in the surrounding area and, consequently, for the varied range of fruit and vegetables at the local markets. We wondered at the locals who, despite the danger of Nile hippos and crocodiles and the possibility of bilharzia infection (bilharzia is a disease caused by parasitic worms and can cause a range of health problems), nevertheless swim in both the river and the lake.*

*We discovered that although Uganda is one of the poorest countries in the world in terms of per capita income (less than €120 a month), it is nevertheless rich in a way that cannot be measured in money. Its natural and cultural diversity represent an enormous potential for tourism which, with the right development strategy, could bring changes to the country. And with the knowledge and wisdom we discovered during our journey, the country is also a true pearl for all those adventurous travellers who are able to look at the world with open eyes and hearts.*