

Gorilla Highlands Marketing Action Plan 2018-2019

November 2017 - GORILLA HIGHLANDS BOOTCAMP DRAFT

- **Concept**

We are marketing the Gorilla Highlands (GH), a region consisting of Rwanda, western Uganda and eastern Congo. Our mission is to successfully brand and promote the region in a manner that brings an increase in responsible, sustainable and culturally sensitive tourism. We put particular stress on tourism helping the bottom-of-the-pyramid inhabitants of the region, in terms of both income and self-respect.

- **Strategy**

- Objectives

- to position the term “Gorilla Highlands” as a universally accepted name for the region
- to establish the region as a destination by itself (instead of a short gorilla stop-over)
- to expand the perception of the region beyond gorillas
- to promote the region as an essential bucket list item
- to protect the culture and wellbeing of the region’s disadvantaged people

- Metrics of success

- permanent placement on the Google search results #1 page for targeted keywords
- coverage of the region in 10 high-profile media (newspapers, TV stations)
- coverage of the region in 20 specialised media (magazines, blogs)

- Focus on the following regional attractions

- hiking and dugout canoeing
- unique Rift Valley landscapes (volcanoes, lakes, rainforests)
- rich history
- cultural variety
- mountain and Grauer’s gorillas

- Approach to key target groups

- Target groups:

- people planning their first visit to Africa
- hikers/trekkers/adventure travellers
- domestic tourists
- expat communities in Eastern and Central Africa
- families
- volunteers
- gorilla/wildlife enthusiasts

- Target countries:

- raise awareness of the region in leading international sources of tourists to the region (primary: USA, UK, South Africa, Germany; secondary: Canada, Holland, Italy, Australia, Sweden, France, Japan)
- position GH as a preferred first African destination in emerging markets (focus on China and the Middle East)

- Outreach channels
 - Pocket Guide (10,000 printed copies): 3 editions/yearly, magazine-style
 - Gorilla Highlands blog: longform, media-rich articles once or twice a week
 - other blogs: contribute as a guest, offer content to smaller websites
 - social media:
 - focus on Facebook and Instagram (Twitter used occasionally and for special projects only; Pinterest as a periodically updated regional photo library)
 - create unique content for each social media channel, emphasis on video
 - define a system of GH hashtags
 - develop relationships with influencers for each target group, offer them content
 - engage journalists and bloggers
 - follow and curate posts from the region/organisations with similar missions
 - messengers: content to be shared on WhatsApp and FB, especially video
 - interactive ebook: made freely available for all platforms
 - paper book: highly-illustrated, sold locally
 - posters: print posters for hostel noticeboards, expat hangouts
 - quarterly email/print newsletter: update and inspire GH partners and employees
 - monthly online TV show: touring footage + interviews with tourism workers
 - content sold to TV stations: Uganda/Rwanda media have local content quotas
 - media library: available to others with linking to GH as a requirement for us
 - online travel communities: engage on any locally relevant questions
 - Wikipedia/Wikitravel: curate and contribute

- Conversion (turning site visitors into paying customers)
 - continuously improve the website, monitor Google Analytics
 - add a regional booking system focused on activities

- Referrals
 - assure inbound links from major local and international websites
 - create Gorilla Highlands ambassador network

- **Action Items**
 - Research potential allies and collaborators, local and international
 - Who could benefit from being connected to us/ who can we benefit from syndication of our blog posts in local/ international newspapers?
 - Who are key journalists and outlets writing/producing on sustainable tourism?
 - get contacts of main journalists writing about East/Central Africa (global media)
 - find key media in target countries without in-Africa full-time correspondents
 - Who/what are key influencers for each target group, how to approach them?

 - Search Engine Optimisation:
 - What are most high impact target keywords?
 - Who is our ranking competition? What are their backlinks?
 - Create database of targeted inbound links

 - Establish a system for collection of accommodation statistics to provide better metrics

 - Obtain sources of funding for promoting the region independent from advertising (grants, corporate social responsibility, Google and Facebook support)