

# EXPLORERS AND CONSERVATIONISTS OF THE VIRUNGA VOLCANOES



# **EXPLORERS AND CONSERVATIONISTS OF THE VIRUNGA VOLCANOES**

CATALOGUE AND EXHIBITION

Not for sale

Dian Fossey Map Room  
Volcanoes Safaris Virunga Lodge, Rwanda  
2 March 2017

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Founder, Volcanoes Safaris

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**CURATED BY GIULIA AJMONE MARSAN**

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# INTRODUCTION

As a child growing up in Uganda in the 1960s, I was inspired by Walter Baumgärtel's early efforts with gorilla tourism in the Mgahinga side of the Virunga Volcanoes, based at the Travellers Rest Hotel in Kisoro. That is when I first heard about a mysterious American woman living high in the Virunga Volcanoes, studying gorillas.

Forty years later, in 2004, I built Virunga Lodge in Rwanda, facing the Karisoke Research Center that Dian Fossey had set up in the Virunga volcanoes. By remarkable coincidence the lodge was built near where Robert von Beringe had camped in 1902. It was the first lodge to be built by an international company near Parc National des Volcans after the war and was at the forefront of reviving gorilla tourism. It has established itself as the leading luxury lodge for gorilla tracking in Rwanda.

As pioneers of developing and promoting sustainable gorilla tourism for twenty years in the region, Volcanoes Safaris would like to pay tribute to the unique contribution of Dian Fossey and other conservationists through the Dian Fossey Map Room.

Dian Fossey worked in Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo, and finally in Rwanda from 1967 to 1985. She set up the Karisoke Research Center in the volcanoes in 1967, 50 years ago. Her work was instrumental in understanding the lives of gorillas, helping understand how to protect them and led to setting up sensitive tourism to help try and preserve them for the future.

I am convinced that sensitive, controlled tourism is essential for the protection of the gorillas – by providing a livelihood for the communities and contributing to conservation. Without sensitive tourism it is debatable how many gorillas would have survived today.

I hope visitors to Virunga Lodge will enjoy the exhibition, which gives an overview of the exploration and conservation of the area around the Virunga Volcanoes.

**PRAVEEN MOMAN**

Founder, Volcanoes Safaris

# DIAN FOSSEY AND THE KARISOKE RESEARCH CENTER

Dian Fossey founded the Karisoke Research Center in 1967, as she began her groundbreaking work studying the mountain gorillas of the Virunga mountains. She set up her tents between Mt. Karisimbi and Mt. Visoke, and created the name “Karisoke”. Fossey soon realized that the mountain gorillas’ survival was in extreme danger, with only about 240 left at the time. She then founded the “Digit Fund” to raise funds for their protection.

Even though she died in 1985, her work has not only continued, but greatly expanded since then, carried out today by the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund International.

The Karisoke Research Center today is a world-renowned centre for gorilla protection and research, with its 100 plus award-winning gorilla trackers protecting the gorillas every day, anti-poaching teams patrolling the forest, and scientists undertaking numerous studies that help us learn more about the gorillas and the best conservation methods.

Karisoke is now also a leading centre of education, providing high-level field courses and research opportunities for hundreds of science students, from Rwanda and other countries in the region, helping to train the next generation of conservation leaders. It also has a unique gorilla conservation exhibition open to the public and communities, providing information both current and historic about the mountain gorillas and the work of Dian Fossey.

Dian Fossey was critical to ensuring the survival of mountain gorillas for generations to come. Today there is a total population of almost 900 gorillas.

We are very grateful that Volcanoes Safaris is continuing to honour her memory through the building of the Dian Fossey Map Room at their beautiful Virunga Lodge.

**TARA STOINSKI**

President, Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund International

# EXPLORERS AND CONSERVATIONISTS OF THE VIRUNGA VOLCANOES

## EXPLORERS

This exhibition gives a synoptic overview of the exploration and conservation of the Virunga Volcanoes from the 1860s to the death of Dian Fossey in 1985. It traces the journeys of the great explorers, including Speke, Stanley, Kandt and von Götzen, and local administrators in the colonial period. The courage and perseverance of the explorers and conservationists who discovered the secrets of this unique area and the iconic mountain gorilla is a remarkable story.

The exploration of East and Central Africa during the second half of the nineteenth century focused largely on discovering the source of the Nile. This riveting quest focused on the heart of the Great Rift Valley on the borders of Rwanda, Uganda and the DRC. Explorers from different countries fiercely competed in this endeavour, moved by exploration as much as by helping their governments to claim territory. John Hanning Speke in 1861 and Henry Morton Stanley in 1876 glimpsed the Virunga Volcanoes from a distance. However it was only from 1890–1892 that the German explorer Franz Stuhlmann was able to pinpoint their location more accurately.

The expeditions of German explorers in the 1880s were striving to establish German ascendancy over the local rulers and against the territorial claims of the British and the Belgians. In June 1894 Gustav Adolf von Götzen, at the head of a German expedition to cross Africa from East to West, was the first European to see and explore Kivu Lake and to climb a volcano.

The governments of Belgium, Britain and Germany continued to quarrel about their land possessions in the Kivu and Virunga Volcanoes until 1910 when a settlement was reached accepting mainly natural boundaries rather than arbitrary *meridians and latitudes*.



## CONSERVATIONISTS

The exhibition also provides an overview of the contribution of different researchers, scholars and conservationists to the understanding of the mountain gorilla since 1902.

On 17 October 1902 Robert von Beringe, ascending the slopes of the Sabinyo Volcano shot two gorillas, officially 'discovering' the gorilla. The remains of one silverback demonstrated the presence of gorillas beyond West Africa and was identified as *Gorilla Gorilla Berengei* by the Berlin Natural Science Museum.

The explorers and the colonial administrators opened the way to the museum collectors and later conservationists. After the early expeditions of the British Natural History Museum from 1905 to 1907 and the ones of the Duke of Mecklenburg in 1907-1908 and 1910-1911, it was Carl Akeley from the American Museum of Natural History who began the study of gorillas in the field in the 1920s. He also formulated plans for creating a gorilla sanctuary.

In the 1950s Walter Baumgärtel started gorilla tourism at the Travellers Rest Hotel in Uganda in a simple way. George Schaller's year with the gorillas in 1959 began scientific research. This was then more formally developed by Dian Fossey setting up the Karisoke Research Center in 1967 which continues to be run by the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund International. Felix Ndagijimana, a Rwandan, is the current director.

Today the work of gorilla conservation is carried out by different organisations that work in the region, in close partnership with the governments of Rwanda, Uganda and DRC.

**GIULIA AJMONE MARSAN**

## THE GREAT EXPLORERS

### JOHN HANNING SPEKE

NOVEMBER 1861

*Returning home to the tents as the evening sky was illuminated with the red glare of the sun, my attention was attracted by observing in the distance some bold skyscraping cones situated in the country of Ruanda, which at once brought back to recollection the ill-defined story I had heard from the Arabs of a wonderful hill always covered with clouds, on which snow and hail was constantly falling. This was a valuable discovery, for I found these hills to be the great turn-point of the central African watershed ... The Mfumbiro cones in Ruanda, which I believe reach 10,000 feet, are said to be the highest of the "Mountains of the Moon".*

John Hanning Speke

*Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile, London 1863*



Speke (1827–1864) who identified Lake Victoria in 1858 and the Ripon Falls in 1862, leading him to state that the source of the Nile was settled, never entered Rwanda. During the second expedition, while tracking north on the western side of Lake Victoria, he saw most clearly the Virungas, then called Mfumbiro or Ufumbiro. He placed, incorrectly, the Virungas as the most eastern mountain group of the range of the Rwenzoris, then called the Mountains of the Moon. These were thought to form a great arc from east to west, north of Lake Tanganyika, as seen in this detail of Speke's Map of Eastern Equatorial Africa.





# THE GREAT EXPLORERS

## HENRY MORTON STANLEY

MARCH 1876

*The next day, at 8 A.M., near the end of the valley, we came to Meruré Lake, which is about two miles long, and thence, crossing three different mountains, arrived at Kiwandaré mountain, and from its summit, 5,600 feet above the sea, obtained a tolerably distinct view of the triple cone of Ufumbiro ... Several lines of mountains, with lateral valleys between, rose between the valley of the Alexandra Nile and Ufumbiro.*

Henry Morton Stanley

*Through the Dark Continent: or the Sources of the Nile around the Great Lakes of Equatorial Africa and down the Livingstone River to the Atlantic Ocean, London 1878*



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Stanley (1841–1904) started his second African expedition in 1874. He explored the Lakes Victoria and Tanganyika and established that the Lualaba river did not flow into the Nile, but into the Congo river. Stanley's map, showing the eastern half of Equatorial Africa, separates the Virungas from the Rwenzoris and hints at the existence of Lake Kivu and Lake Edward, whereas the Alexandra Nyanza was a confusion between swamps and a tributary of the Kagera river, which Stanley called the Alexandra Nile.



THE GREAT EXPLORERS

FRANZ STUHLMANN

APRIL 1891

*The Mfumbiro mountains, viewed from the north, break down in six separate cones. A massive peak is at the far east, the Mfumbiro as called by the Ugandan and Mpóro people, to which a smaller peak with a clearly collapsed crater is connected. The third cone, called Nahánga, has two collapsed craters at its summit. Somewhat separately from the latter on a small plateau are two cones, the western one of which, called Kissigáli, reaches a considerable height ... Further west the last cone is smaller and has an extraordinarily characteristic volcano shape with a wide crater. Our guides maintain that from this mountain called Virungo-vya-góngo ... fire erupts at night.*

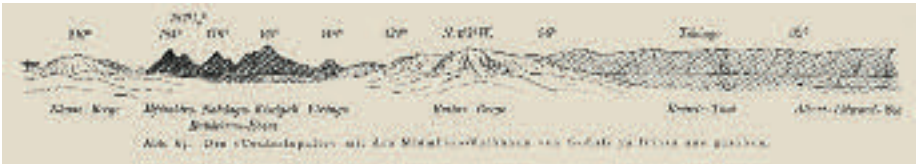
Franz Stuhlmann  
Mit Emin Pascha ins Herz von Afrika, Berlin 1894, pp. 264–265



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The map and profile of the mountains developed by Stuhlmann (1863–1928) during the expedition with Emin Pasha, start showing quite clearly the Virunga Volcanoes.

The dark green line on the map indicates the beginning of the primeval forest.



## THE GREAT EXPLORERS

### GUSTAV ADOLF GÖTZEN

JUNE 1894

*The porter Mabruk was climbing in front of me ... Suddenly I see that he stops and raises his arm ... I rush forward summoning all my strength, but as I reach him, I jump back at the sight which lay before me ... At my feet lay like a huge arena, a crater tenfold larger than the Coliseum. The rock wall, at the edge of which we stand, falls off almost vertically: its basic colour is the darkest black, its innumerable cracks tinged in pink and red ... We are looking down not in a dark abyss, but on a light, apparently entirely flat surface sparkling like marble in different colours. In the northern section of this surface we see the opening of two shafts ... out of one powerful clouds of vapour gush continuously and irregularly a noise, partly thundering, partly hissing, comes from the depths.*

Gustav Adolf Götzen

*Durch Afrika von Ost nach West, Berlin 1895*



© Getty Images



Von Götzen (1866–1910), leading a German expedition across Africa in June 1894, was the first European to see Lake Kivu and to climb a volcano in the Virungas; Nyiragongo. Götzen's journey was the transition between exploration into the interior of Africa on a grand scale and subsequent localized expeditions by colonial administrators. The map progressively becomes more accurate, except for the names of the volcanoes and the shape of Lake Kivu.

Götzen was Commander of the German East African Troops and Governor of German East Africa from 1901 until 1906.

# EXPLORATION BY COLONIAL ADMINISTRATORS

## RICHARD KANDT

SUMMER 1898

*We followed ... the Rukarara river along glorious steep valleys ... I reached the end of one of these valleys with my caravan in mid August 1898. Here the Rukavara is nothing more than a 30 cm wide rivulet in a gorge without a path covered by forest and lush vegetation. I penetrated the gorge with a native and some of my people the following day. It was a terrible job: we needed almost one hour to track 500 meters ... After strenuous hours we reached exhausted, soaked, dirty from head to toe, a small humid cauldron at the end of the gorge: from its ground the source was not gushing but producing water drop by drop – Caput Nili [Source of the Nile].*

Richard Kandt

*Caput Nili. Eine empfindsame Reibe zu den Quellen des Nils, Berlin 1921*



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Richard Kandt (1867–1918), doctor and poet, inspired by the expedition of von Götzen, explored Rwanda from January 1898 to 1901. He established that the Rukarara river, which forms the Nyabarongo, was the main source of the Kagera Nile and worked out the detailed outline of Lake Kivu. His discoveries overshadowed the work of other German officers, making him the pioneer of Rwanda and Urundi. He was appointed German Resident in Rwanda between 1908 and 1914.



## EXPLORATION BY COLONIAL ADMINISTRATORS

### ROBERT VON BERINGE

OCTOBER 1902

*On the 17th October we left our camp with a tent, 8 water tanks, 5 ascaris as well as the necessary porters, and we reached the saddle [between Kana and Sabinyo] in 4½ hours. At about 3,100 metres height we set up our tent ... From our camp we saw a group of black, big apes, which were trying to reach the highest peak of the volcano. Of this group we succeeded killing two, that precipitated with crashing noise in the gorge towards north east. After five hours of taxing work we managed to pull one up with ropes. The ape, looking like a human, was a 1½ metre tall male, weighing 200 pounds. The chest was hairless and the hands and feet of tremendous size.*

Robert von Beringe

*Bericht ... über eine Expedition nach Ruanda, Deutsches Kolonialblatt, xiv, 12, Berlin, 15 June 1903*



Robert von Beringe (1865–1940) was the first European to see and kill a mountain gorilla, as shown by the photo on the right. Having joined the German East African Protectorate Troops, he travelled through the area of the Virungas in autumn 1899 and spring 1900. Taking advantage of Kandt's advice and the work of other German officers, he mapped the area in detail, discovering Lake Bunyonyi, in southern Uganda, then called Ngesi. He also sought to establish the names of the volcanoes as known by the natives. Accordingly these were: Kirunga or Muhawura, Mgahinga, Sabinyo, Wissoko, Karissimbi, Kiwumba or Mikenso, Gongo and Namlagira, as his map published in 1901 in the *Wissenschaftliche Beihefte zum Deutschen Kolonialblatte* shows.



Globus in July 1904



# EXPLORATION BY COLONIAL ADMINISTRATORS

## MAPPING OF THE VIRUNGAS AND KIVU

1906-1912

*The exact delimitation of a future state in occupied country in large part unknown is a task in which the difficulties and the consequences escape all foreknowledge.*

Bismark to Leopold II, 4 September 1884

*Mfumbiro is a myth.*

Lord Salisbury, 1 May 1900

The Kivu-Mfumbiro border conflict between the Congo State – later under Belgium – and Germany and Britain continued from 1884 to 1910. It exemplifies the scramble for remote parts of Africa, often based on geographical ignorance of the area.

The British wanted Mfumbiro to access Lake Kivu and create the Cairo to Cape corridor. The Germans did not want the British encircling them. The Belgians wanted to draw the border along the 30th meridian, which was discovered to lie further east than initially thought – see map opposite: this would have reduced the extent of German and British possessions. The Germans and the British made a deal and teamed up against the Belgians, proposing natural boundaries. They succeeded in getting the better of them only after the death of Leopold II. The Germans ceded Goma and Idjwi Island on Lake Kivu to the Belgians.

In order to implement the agreement of 1910 yet another boundary committee of officers, academics, cartographers and topographers was dispatched to the region: Heinrich Fonk (1869-1933), George J. F. H. Maury (1880-1953), Julien-Émil Bastien (1865-1924), Gaston Schlobach (1863-1921) and Evan Maclean Jack (1873-1951).

One of their tasks was to clear up whether Mfumbiro was a region – as shown by the green line on the map below – or an individual mountain, or a range.



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# GORILLA CONSERVATIONISTS

## CARL AKELEY

1921

*As I took the gun from the bearer, I glimpsed a patch of black fur half hidden in the greenery fifty yards ahead. I crouched down to wait for a better view and motioned the boys to bring up my motion picture camera. While it was being slowly pushed toward me, the animal I was watching climbed upon the horizontal moss-covered branch of a half dead tree, apparently looking straight at me.*

*I raised my camera carefully and put it in position. As I did so, a large female gorilla climbed up and settled herself comfortably on the horizontal branch. Almost before I realized what was happening I was turning the crank of the camera while two undisturbed gorillas stood out in full view ... At the time I did not give a thought to the fact that I was doing something which had never been done before.*

Carl and Mary L. Jobe Akeley  
*Lions, Gorillas and their Neighbors*, New York 1951



Somaliand 1896 © Getty Images



Diorama, © American Museum of Natural History



Akeley with the death mask of the first gorilla he shot  
© American Museum of Natural History

Carl Akeley (1864–1926) was the first American to visit and study mountain gorillas. He was a taxidermist, sculptor, inventor and photographer. He initially visited Africa in 1896 for the Field Museum of Chicago. He went to Rwanda in 1921 when he shot five gorillas for the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) of New York. He also shot the first ever film of gorillas with a camera specially adapted by himself. These encounters persuaded him that gorillas required protection and in 1922 he developed a plan for setting up a sanctuary contributing to the creation of Parc National Albert in 1925.

He returned in 1926 for completing the diorama of the gorillas (see above), for studying gorillas and surveying the Parc National Albert.



© The Field Museum, CSZ62884



# GORILLA CONSERVATIONISTS

## WALTER BAUMGÄRTEL

1955–1969

*Suddenly some twigs snapped. Reuben stopped speaking in mid sentence and signalled to stay put. Between him and me a massive gorilla burst out of the bush followed by wife and child. They stopped in the middle of the path, but the old male disliked something. He looked in all directions, stopped short when he noticed us and dived under the shrubs opposite. While his wife followed obediently, the puppy hesitantly did not move ... Left alone, he eventually felt uneasy and looked around helpless. Thank God, mother was already there! Without fuss she grabbed the small curious youngster by the hand, slapped him on the bottom and dragged him in the secure woodland. That was such a human family scene, that one does not need to be embarrassed by our distant relatives.*

Walter Baumgärtel  
*König in Gorillaland, Stuttgart 1960*



© National Geographic Society, Washington



Walter Baumgärtel (1902–1997) settled in Kisoro, Uganda, when he became the sole owner of the Travellers Rest Hotel in 1956. Fascinated by the forest and its inhabitants he started exploring it, on the suggestion of the District Chief, Emanuel Mutwale, with Reuben Rwanzagire, a local guide who became the first Head Guide for gorilla tracking.

Baumgärtel, wishing to attract tourists to his lodge, obtained permission to organize tracking to see mountain gorillas, laying the foundation of gorilla tourism as part of a conservation strategy. This was subsequently developed with the cooperation of the Rwandan authorities by Amy Vedder and Bill Weber in the late 1970s in Rwanda with the Mountain Gorilla Project, a consortium including Flora and Fauna International, the African Wildlife Leadership Foundation and the WWF.

Baumgärtel also recognized the role of scientific research and wrote to the paleontologist Louis Leakey and the anthropologist Raymond Dart offering bed and board for gorilla researchers. Thus, the Travellers Rest Hotel became a refuge and a meeting point for scientists, in particular George Schaller and Dian Fossey. The former learned how to track gorillas from Baumgärtel's trackers, especially Reuben, who had no equal as a guide in central Africa.

# GORILLA CONSERVATIONISTS

## GEORGE SCHALLER

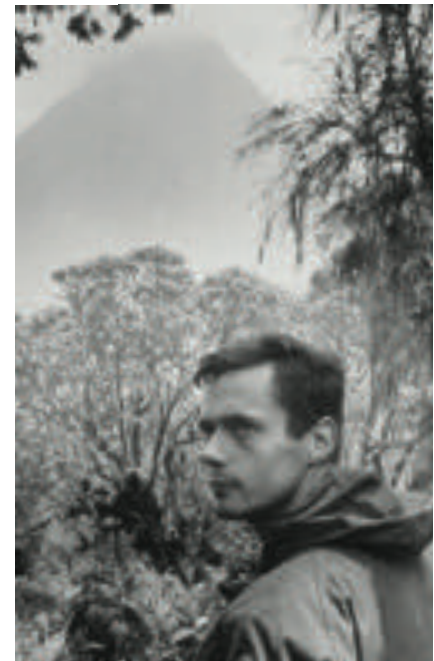
1959–1960

*The musty, somewhat sweet odor of gorillas hung in the air. Somewhere ahead and out of sight, a gorilla roared and roared again, uuua-uuua! an explosive, half-screaming sound that shattered the stillness of the forest again ... Then another roar, but farther away. I continued over the ridge, down, and up again. Finally I saw them, on the opposite slope about two hundred feet away, some sitting on the ground, others in trees.*

*An adult male, easily recognizable by his huge size and grey back, sat among the herbs and vines. Beside him sat a juvenile perhaps four years old. Three female, fat and placid, with sagging breasts and long nipples, squatted near the male ... We sat watching each other. The large male, more than the others, held my attention ... I felt a desire to communicate with him, to let him know by some small gesture that I intended no harm, that I wished only to be near him.*

George B. Schaller

*The Year of the Gorilla, Chicago 1964*



© Getty Images



© George B Schaller



© Getty Images

The field work of George Schaller (born 1933) with mountain gorillas, at Kabara on the slopes of Mount Mikeno in Congo, was ground-breaking. However it was interrupted just after a year because of the instability of the country. It also represented the beginning of a career of a remarkable conservationist who contributed to the creation of several parks worldwide.

In Kabara, he concentrated on range behaviour and gorilla sensitivity. His work conveyed how gentle the mountain gorilla actually is, supported by his witty sketches.



© George B Schaller



# GORILLA CONSERVATIONISTS

## DIAN FOSSEY

1966–1985

*Exactly at 4:30 P.M. on September 24, 1967, I established the Karisoke Research Centre – “Kari” for the first four letters of Mt. Karisimbi that overlooked my camp from the south; “soke” for the last four letters of Mt. Visoke, whose slopes rose north some 12,172 feet immediately behind the 10,000-foot camp ...*

*Since that day I never have had the slightest difficulty in recalling the elation felt upon being able to renew my research with the mountain gorilla. Little did I know then that by setting up two small tents in the wilderness of the Virungas I had launched the beginnings of what was to become an internationally renowned research station eventually to be utilized by students and scientists from many countries.*

Dian Fossey  
*Gorillas in the Mist*, Boston 1983



Invited by Louis Leakey, Dian Fossey (1932–1985) built on the work of Schaller, studying the gorillas’ social habits and promoting their conservation, until her tragic death on 26 December 1985. She also pioneered the habituation of mountain gorillas, while the Belgian Adrien Deschryver (1939–1989) worked on the habituation of eastern lowland gorillas in Kahuzi-Biéga, DRC.

After leaving the Kabara base, Dian Fossey established herself at Karisoke in 1967, working in the field with students, including Alan Goodall, Sandy Harcourt and Ian Redmond. Her work demonstrated that gorillas were gentle endangered giants that had to be protected and not violent brutes. Her work was widely publicized through her articles in *National Geographic* with Bob Campbell’s photographs. Sir David Attenborough’s 1978 documentary *Life on Earth* shared the life of gorillas with a wider audience.

When she started her work there were about 450 gorillas, but due to habitat loss and poaching their number was dwindling, dropping to only 250 in the early 1980s. The killing by poachers of Digit, her favourite gorilla, led Fossey to set up the Digit Fund, the precursor of The Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund.

Thanks to the work of the different explorers and conservationists, supported by the governments of Rwanda, DRC and Uganda, the mountain gorilla has a population of almost 900 today. Sensitive, controlled tourism and revenue sharing with the communities safeguard the gorillas’ future.





Dian Fossey with Puck, a female of Group 5 on Visoke in 1976

Photo by Harry von Rompaey © The Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund International



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## Note on the building of the Dian Fossey Map Room

Construction of the Dian Fossey Map Room began in June 2016 and it was opened on 2 March 2017. Conceived by Praveen Moman, founder of Volcanoes Safaris, the design elements were developed with Felix Holland of Studio FH ([www.studiofh.ug](http://www.studiofh.ug)) in Kampala. Cyprien Serugero, Volcanoes Safaris' Construction Manager, supervised the building of the Map Room. Cyprien was born near Virunga and has worked with Volcanoes Safaris since 2002.

The Kigali-based hospitality consultant, Maxine Silsby of Food & Stuff, carried out the decoration. The contemporary design incorporates locally sourced materials, such as Africa's famous patterned Kente material, which reflect Rwandan design and construction techniques, to echo the design of the main lodge.

All the furniture, basket lights and soft furnishings have been made on site with the help of women's groups based in the local villages using quilting techniques to produce cushions with a difference. The colours have been chosen to reflect the gardens surrounding the map room and local pottery workshops have made wall uplighters in the Rwandan traditional colours of mottled green to complement the locally sourced building materials. The room has a feeling of bringing the outside gardens inside to create a serene relaxed environment.



