

# AUSTIN

MEET THE CITY'S MOST ELIGIBLE SINGLES  
(YES, WE INCLUDED WOMEN THIS YEAR.)

MONTHLY | AUG 2015

# BEST PIZZA

## THE TOP 10 PIZZERIAS IN TOWN

+

## THE BEST PIES FROM CREATIVE TO CLASSIC

EASY GRUY? TO NO. 1 & FOR THE PIE WITH TOES.

**LINE ON**  
AUSTIN IS WORKING TO  
BECOME A SOLAR POWER LEADER

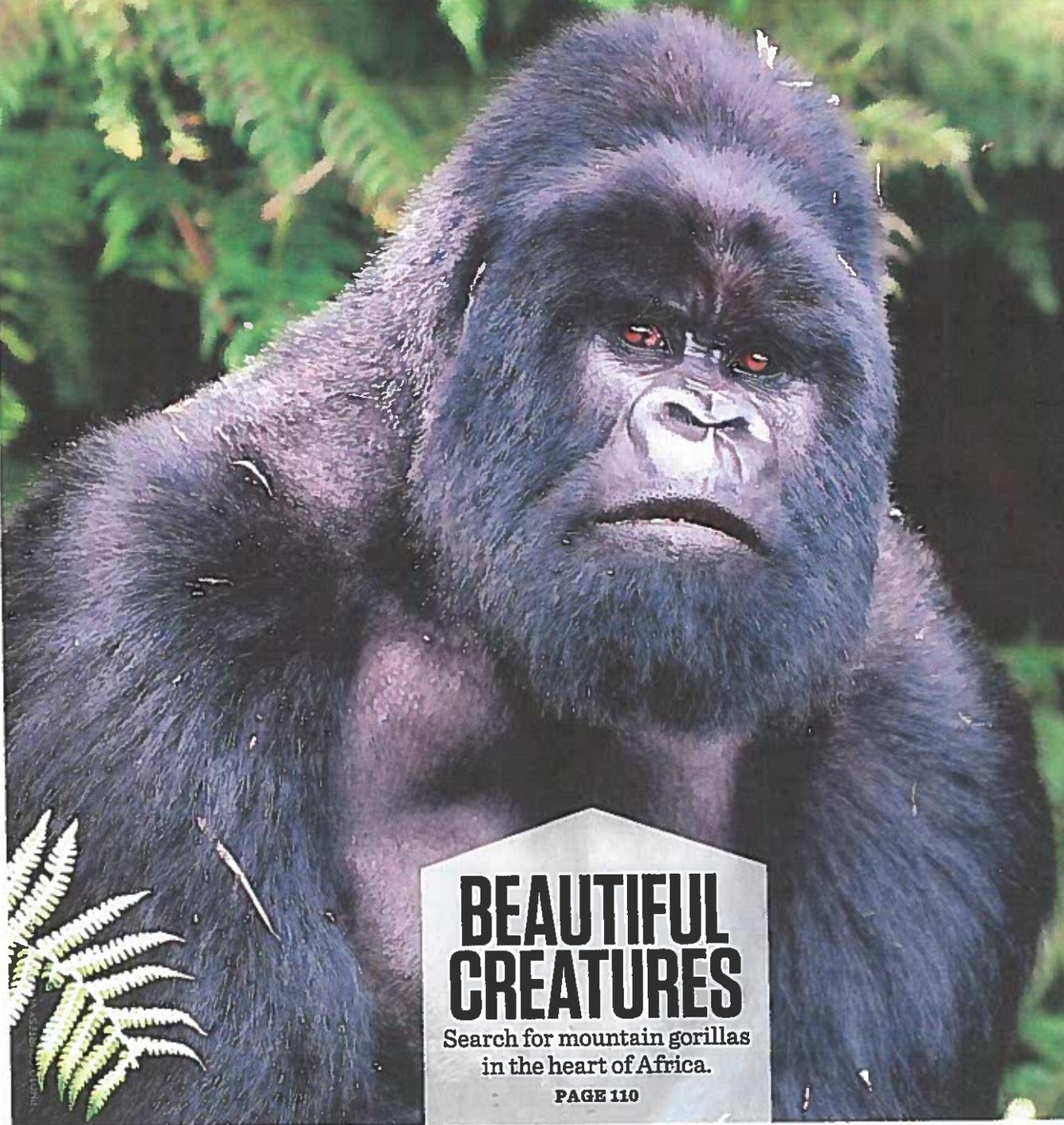
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# Travel



## BEAUTIFUL CREATURES

Search for mountain gorillas  
in the heart of Africa.

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CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:  
The native Batwa people; a colorful Gahinga sunbird; a ground view of the Virunga Volcanoes; the interior of Mount Gahinga Lodge



## UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

Learn about Batwa culture, view exotic birds and track gorillas in their natural habitat in Uganda and Rwanda

BY BECCA HENSLEY

**T**he rain patters and puddles on an emerald verge in a village wedged into the foothills of the **Virunga Volcanoes** in **Uganda**. Soaked, my friend Margie and I dance with a throng of children and a mob of adults who are so tiny they look like fairies. We hold umbrellas, which bob and weave in the wind. A piper leading the pack, Margie blows into her harmonica, honking a bluesy tune. But she's not the only one. All our dancing partners, Batwa Pygmies, the indigenous hunters and gatherers of the region, play harmonicas, too. That's because Margie has brought one for everyone and taught us all to play. We conga with glee, emitting dulcet tones, bonding and laughing, driven by melodious zeal. Music, it seems, will always be the universal language.

Visiting **Uganda** and **Rwanda** to see the elusive and endangered mountain gorillas with **Volcanoes Safaris**, we've stopped off first at **Mount Gahinga Lodge**. At the end of a remote road on the edge of **Mgahinga Gorilla National Park**, the resort

has just nine bandas, native huts that evoke the Hemingway days of Africa. An intimate eco-lodge that uses solar power and filtered rainwater, **Mount Gahinga** specializes in immersing guests into the Batwa culture.

Here, we ascend a caldera to visit a tribal elder and his family in their traditional, mud-built dwelling and hike through the park with guides in search of the feathery golden monkey. On the trail, we hear the trumpeting of forest elephants and keep our eyes wide for leopard sightings. Along the **Albertine Rift**, we photograph a bevy of colorful birds, and

### Insider Tips

▼ To get there, fly British Airways via London to Entebbe, Uganda.

▼ While in Rwanda, visit the Kigali Genocide Memorial Center, a remarkable, heart-rending and informative memorial museum.

▼ Typical food in Rwanda and Uganda includes boiled beans, bananas and sweet potatoes.

at the lodge's adjacent Batwa community center, we learn about the plight of this original ethnic group, displaced from the forest with the onset of modernity.

Now embraced by conservation efforts, the still-primitive Batwa people reclaim their ancestral home amid the lush mountain forests and high-altitude swamps, but also learn contemporary skills—from sewing to farming—to help them survive independently in the 21st century. They teach us how to dance, while Margie shows them the power of the harmonica.

We transfer to **Rwanda's Land of a Thousand Hills**, a half-day's drive away, to prepare to track the gorillas. This is where famous primatologist **Dian Fossey** set up camp to study the noble creatures in 1967.

Continued on page 112

BIRD, VOLCANO AND LODGE PHOTOS COURTESY VOLCANOES SAFARIS. BATWA PHOTO FROM SHUTTERSTOCK

# AUSTIN MONTHLY'S BEST OF THE CITY 2015

STARTING AUGUST 17<sup>TH</sup>

VOTE FOR YOUR FAVORITE THINGS  
ABOUT THE CAPITAL CITY FOR  
AUSTIN MONTHLY'S THIRD ANNUAL  
BEST OF THE CITY ISSUE

FOOD • DRINK • PEOPLE  
SHOPPING • CITY LIFE  
DIVERSIONS • HEALTH & BEAUTY

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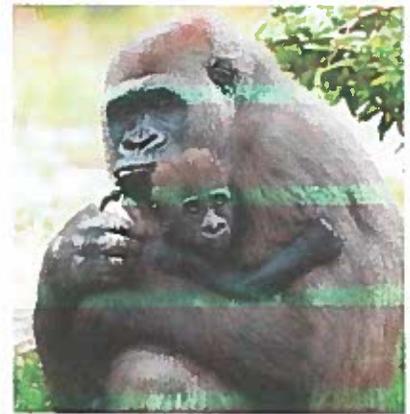


TRAVEL  
FAR

Continued from page 110

Currently, only 850 or so mountain gorillas remain in the world, and they roam the mountainous, side-by-side terrain of Uganda, Rwanda and the Republic of Congo, frequently crossing the borders. Staying at **Virunga Lodge**, we head to Volcanoes National Park, famous for its 10 on-the-move, foraging gorilla families. To protect the gorillas and their environment, the reserve limits the number of visitors to 80 a day. The permit to join a guided hike costs \$750 per person, but a gorilla sighting is guaranteed.

We begin our walk just after dawn, being told the march through muddy inclines and forests could last all day. We carry a lunch, don thick gardening gloves and use rustic walking sticks to navigate through the trees. Since the



A mountain gorilla holds its young

gorillas rove constantly, they could be anywhere—though scouts have been sent ahead to help approximate a location.

Three hours later, we suddenly find the gorillas. Just 20 feet away, the Silverback sits like a fat Buddha statue in a tiny clearing, chewing, as if in deep thought. His family gambols around him. A teen beats his chest, babies swing on vines above and one female grooms another. Cameras steadied, we sit among them, becoming part of their family. We observe them for the hour allowed, then gather our things to return to camp. I am awed by their majesty and intelligence, moved by how much the gorillas seem like us. Surely, they too could play the harmonica. 

PHOTO FROM SHUTTERSTOCK