

KWITA IZINA CONTENT

Introduction and background

Kwita Izina is modelled off a centuries old tradition in which Rwandans name their children in the presence of family and friends. Inspired by this ancient tradition of naming family newborn babies, KWITA IZINA has become a Rwandan annual ceremony of giving a name to a newborn gorilla in Volcanoes National Park in the Virunga Mountains.

This ceremony was first introduced in 2005. To host this an annual Gorilla naming ceremony each September is a conservation tool to raise awareness of people living near the park and funds for the ongoing protection, management of the country's mountain gorillas and the expansion of their habitat. In addition, the ceremony is an opportunity to thank the communities that live around Volcanoes National Park, research partners, vets and the dedicated conservationists, rangers and trackers who protect the gorillas.

Over the last 15 years, more than 300 mountain gorillas have been named, each one thoughtfully selected to reflect the infant's individual story and heritage, or to harness good luck and protection. Names have always been significant in Rwanda, where they're believed to influence the character and future prospects of a newborn, helping to shape their life journey.



KWITA-IZINA stage design depicts a mountain gorilla

STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONING

KWITA IZINA is a Rwandan unique event which gathers high-ranking government officials, renowned guests from around the world as well as Rwandans from all sides and through the program the event has attracted more than thousands of international, regional and local participants over the recent years.



Rwanda gorilla naming ceremony 2015. Guests naming the 24 newborn gorillas

ACHIEVEMENT AND IMPACT OF KWITA IZINA

Economic

Mountain gorillas generate significant tourism income, providing direct economic benefits to communities. In 2016, Rwanda generated about US \$400 million in tourism revenue — the majority of which was from tourists visiting the country's mountain gorillas. KWITA IZINA is also a marketing tool; it raises awareness both nationally and internationally of the importance of gorillas 'conservation; but also creates more revenues for the country and acts as an investment attraction.



Social cohesion and participation

The gorilla-naming ceremony provides an opportunity to the local people to sit together with their leaders and other people to share ideas and discuss about the importance of protecting and conserving gorillas and protecting their environmental in general.



The President of the Republic addressing the population of Kinigi on how to improve protection of gorilla

Conclusion

Gorilla-naming is a unique tradition invented by Rwandans, hence becoming a tourist peculiarity. Apart from this, tourism helps in understanding the various cultural, geographical and historical facts of the country. It opens a new window to the world for travelers to broaden their horizons.