



WILDERNESS

Discover Earth's Ultimate,  
Untamed Places

## DESTINATION GUIDE

# REPUBLIC OF RWANDA

Thank you for travelling with us to Rwanda. We've compiled this information with guidelines and some facts about the destination. For more information, visit [www.wildernessdestinations.com](http://www.wildernessdestinations.com) or the Rwanda Tourism Authority [www.visitrwanda.com/tourism](http://www.visitrwanda.com/tourism).

Known as “The Land of a Thousand Hills”, **Rwanda** is a landlocked country in the centre of the Albertine Rift, characterised by mountainous terrain, with rainforest on the western heights and heavily cultivated fields in the valleys below. The legendary Virunga Mountains in the north are home to volcanoes, swathes of cloud forest and half the world's total population of endangered mountain gorillas. Rwanda is home to an impressive diversity of flora and fauna under conservation in Volcanoes, Akagera, Gishwati-Mukura and Nyungwe national parks. The renowned Volcanoes National Park is set in the Virunga Mountains and is home to the range-restricted mountain gorilla and golden monkey. Akagera National Park comprises some of the most scenic savannah in East Africa, and white rhino introduced in 2021.



BISATE

## GREAT-TO-KNOW FACTS



The blue band represents happiness and peace and its significance to the country. Yellow symbolises economic development. Green is for the hope of prosperity, with the sun representing enlightenment.

### Government

Rwanda has been governed as a unitary presidential system since 1994.

### Economy

Agriculture is the mainstay of the economy, with tea and coffee playing leading roles. Tourism has grown considerably and is now also a significant contributor to the country's economic growth. Recent developments include mining of gold, cassiterite and wolframite. Extraction of energy through methane and hydropower are more recent developments contributing to the economy.

### Currency

The Rwandan Franc (RWF) is the local currency.

### Language

Kinyarwanda, French and English are the official languages.

### Time

Two hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT+2) in the Central African Time Zone (CAT).

### Climate

Just south of the equator, much of Rwanda enjoys a tropical climate in higher altitudes. Temperatures range between 15°C at night and 30°C during the day. The Virunga Mountains are cool throughout the year, with Akagera National Park the warmest area in the country. The dry season is from June to mid-September, while the rainy seasons are from mid-February to May, and mid-September to mid-December.



## Essentials to Pack



SAFARI  
SUN HAT



BINOCULARS



GOOD  
CLOSED SHOES



SAFARI  
DUFFLE BAG



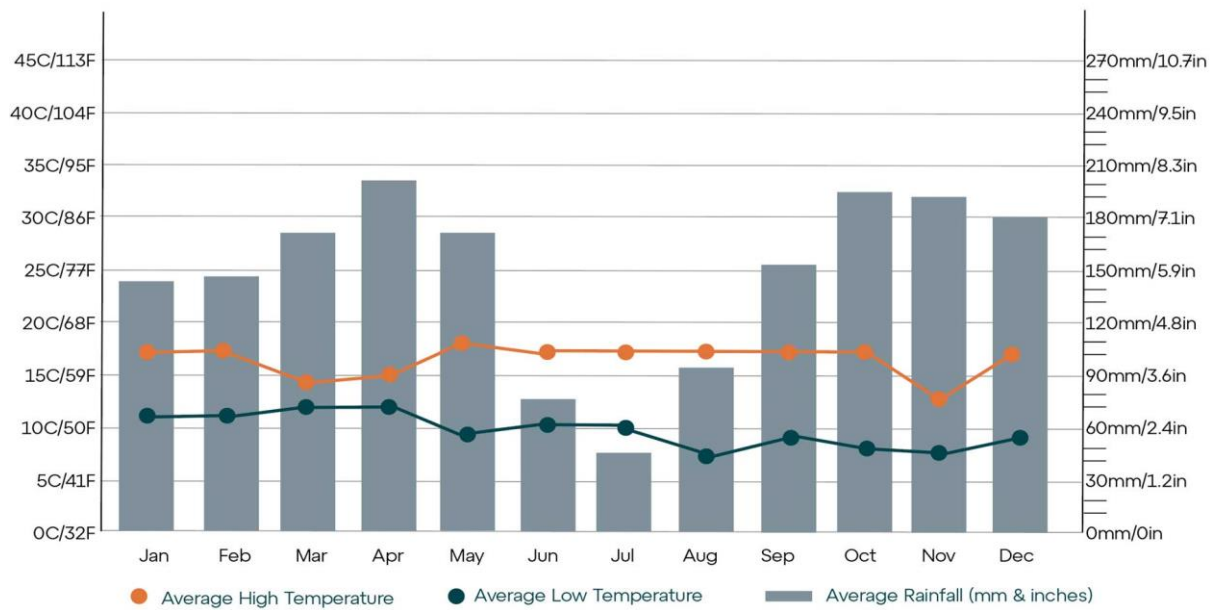
CAMERA



JACKET

## KINIGI

Temperature Average (°C) (°F). These are the average lows and highs.  
Average Rainfall (mm) & (inches). This varies according to the year and location.



## Public Holidays

Rwanda's official public holidays for are listed below. Mondays are declared a holiday if the public holiday falls on a Sunday.

New Year's Day	01 January	Eid al-Fitr	Varies
National Heroes Day	01 February	Independence Day	01 July
Good Friday	Varies	Liberation Day	04 July
Easter Monday	Varies	Assumption Day	15 August
Commemoration of the 1994 Genocide	07 April	Christmas Day	25 December
Labour Day	01 May	Boxing Day	26 December

## 8 CULTURAL & SPECIAL EVENTS

### Monthly: Umuganda (Public Cleaning Day)

Umuganda is a day of communal work in Rwanda, on every last Saturday of the month – this activity requires the full participation of each citizen in their specific location to keep the country clean and to conserve the environment. **Please note:** Use of plastic is completely banned by law since 2018. Any plastics found in your luggage will be confiscated at airports and other points of entry.

### Tour du Rwanda

This is a biannual cycling event, with specific dates confirmed each year.

### FESPAD

This is the Pan-African Dance Festival which celebrates cultures from different countries through unveiling their traditional dances. It is a week-long event hosted by Rwanda every two years, with dates to be confirmed.

### Car-free Day

Taking place on the first and third Sunday of every month, no vehicles are allowed in certain areas of Kigali and in other cities in the country.

### Kigali Peace Marathon

Rwanda is known as the “Land of a Thousand Hills”, making it an ideal venue for a challenging long-distance running event. Held in May, this marathon promotes peace and is open to all who are interested in participating.

### Umuganura (Cultural Harvest)

This is a festival celebrating Rwandan cultural expressions. It takes place in the first week of August in recognition of Rwanda’s traditions, customs and positive values.

### Kwita Izina (Baby Gorilla Naming Ceremony)

This is a momentous occasion in Rwanda when names are assigned to the gorilla babies born in the past year. The specific date of Kwita Izina is announced every year.



# USEFUL TRAVEL INFORMATION

## Visas & entry requirements

Visas remain the responsibility of travellers. Citizens of all countries can obtain a visa on arrival without prior application. Rwanda's single-entry tourist visa fee is currently USD50 and the multiple-entry tourist visa is USD70. Valid for a period of thirty (30) days for single entry or of ninety (90) days for multiple entries. Please refer to Rwanda's online visa application platform for more information.

[www.migration.gov.rw/visa/visitors-visa](http://www.migration.gov.rw/visa/visitors-visa).

## Vaccinations

While the Yellow Fever vaccination is not a requirement when visiting Rwanda only, proof of inoculation in the form of a certificate is required by all SADC countries for any traveller arriving from Rwanda. This onward travel includes Botswana, Kenya, Namibia, Mozambique, Seychelles, South Africa, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe amongst others.)

## Banks

Banks are widely available and operate Monday to Friday, 08:00 – 17:00, with some branches open on Saturdays 09:00 – 13:00. Rwanda's banks are closed on Sundays and public holidays.

## Shopping

Handmade crafts are available at market stalls, roadside stands and from street peddlers. Rwanda is a polythene-free country. For environmental reasons, plastic bags are illegal and have been banned.

## Value Added Tax (VAT)

The standard VAT rate in Rwanda is 18%, with exemptions and zero rating available in certain cases. Taxable transactions – VAT is imposed on the sale of goods and the provision of services.

## Dress code

Rwanda has no strict dress code on what to wear, although travellers are advised to dress conservatively. In business areas, people tend to dress smartly. Cotton clothing is the most comfortable during the day, as it gets quite hot, but the nights tend to be chilly. For gorilla trekking, you will be at altitude in rainforest so expect rain. Warm clothing is required as well as walking shoes or hiking boots, a hat and lightweight parka or raincoat. Wilderness Bisate, Wilderness Bisate Reserve and Wilderness Sabyinyo guests receive backpacks, rain gear, garden gloves and gaiters for their treks. Guests do not need to bring this gear if staying at these lodges.

## Power Supply

Photographers are advised to bring appropriate storage devices, such as a laptop, for downloading images. You're also advised to bring a spare battery for use while the other is being charged, a power converter/adaptor if applicable, cables for computers or cameras and at least 4 x 2GB flash cards.

## Sightseeing

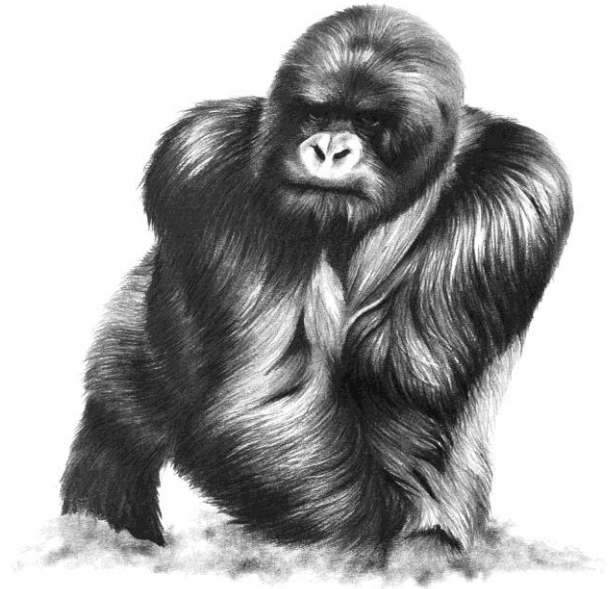
If you are overnighing in Kigali, there are many fascinating tours available. Please contact your Travel Designer for further details.



## SPECIAL ACTIVITIES

### Gorilla trekking permits

Permits must be obtained prior to arrival and are facilitated by our Wilderness Rwanda Travel Shop. More info [www.visitrwanda.com/interests/gorilla-tracking/](http://www.visitrwanda.com/interests/gorilla-tracking/).



### Gorilla & other primate viewing protocols

Twelve habituated mountain gorilla groups can be tracked and observed in Volcanoes National Park. While trekking expeditions do not necessarily cover enormous distances, they can range in length from 1 to 8 kilometres (0.5 to 5 miles) over very steep countryside at high altitude. The undergrowth can be thick, the ground muddy, and, including the time spent with a gorilla group, excursions can last between approximately two and eight hours.

Gorilla viewing protocol is based on the guidelines issued by the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) for great ape viewing. Such protocols are designed specifically to limit stress and behavioural impact, and also potential disease transmission from humans to gorillas. These are critical for gorilla conservation.

- Maximum viewing duration of any group is one hour per day.
- Maximum number of guests per gorilla trekking excursion is eight.
- Please do not consume any food or drink while in the presence of gorillas.
- While gorilla sightings and encounters are very reliable, viewing is dependent on variables such as weather and trekking conditions.
- When with the gorillas, please keep your voice low. Do not make rapid movements that may alarm them.
- Should you need to cough or sneeze, cover your mouth and turn away from the gorillas. Spitting is strictly prohibited!
- If a gorilla should charge or vocalise at you, do not be alarmed, stand still, look away from the gorilla and follow your guide's instructions.
- The minimum age for gorilla viewing is 15 years – this is for safety reasons and to prevent possible disease transmission, with children under this age being more prone to infection.
- Again, to minimise possible transmission of human diseases, visitors are asked to maintain a distance of 7 metres (22 feet) from the gorillas. Guests who display cold, flu or other respiratory tract symptoms will not be allowed to join a gorilla trek.
- Please ensure that your camera flash is turned off, as no flash is allowed when taking images of the gorillas.
- Smoking is not allowed.
- Please keep your surroundings clean and free of litter.

## Altitude sickness

Depending on your travel programme and your previous destination it is likely that you have arrived at a higher altitude than where you came from. Travellers going from lower altitudes or sea level to higher elevations such as Bisate, Bisate Reserve and Sabyinyo may suddenly experience shortness of breath, fatigue, headaches, nausea, and other symptoms resembling flu. This condition, called acute mountain sickness (AMS), is the most common type of altitude sickness. It can occur at elevations as low as 1 500 metres (5 000 feet), where it is likely to last only a day or so, but is more common above 2 400 metres (8 000 feet). At elevations over 3 050 metres (10 000 feet), three out of four people will have symptoms.

Mountain sickness or altitude sickness results from a lack of oxygen caused by going too high, too fast. Barometric pressure decreases as you go higher – that is, the air gets thinner – and you inhale less oxygen per usual breath. Trying to compensate for this, you breathe more deeply. The likelihood of symptoms increases the higher you go. Not everyone feels sick at higher altitudes, and there is no way to predict a person's highest comfortable altitude. Being physically fit is not necessarily a protection.

### Symptoms of mountain sickness

- Increased rate of breathing
- Headache
- A lack of energy and enthusiasm
- Fatigue and insomnia
- Loss of appetite
- Dizziness and nausea
- Shortness of breath and rapid heartbeat accompanying physical exertion

*Wilderness has a few recommendations on what to do to feel better including rest on the first day, hydration, food and beverage recommendations, which are all available to you in camp.*

## Bisate Kwanda

Bisate's Kwanda (day lounge) is the first of its kind in Rwanda. Located in Bisate's organic vegetable garden, it's the perfect space in which to gather yourself before your next adventure. Shower after a last trek, wander around the gardens, enjoy a healthy meal, or a soothing massage. Browse the curio shop for a hand-crafted Rwandan memento.

## Clothing

For all activities in Volcanoes National Park (including gorilla trekking and golden monkey trekking, as well as other hikes), we advise the following:

- At least three fast-drying, collared shirts with long sleeves.
- Three pairs of fast-drying, long trousers, denim jeans or waterproof pants – thick enough to ward off stinging nettles whilst trekking.
- One pair of closed, sturdy and comfortable walking shoes – lightweight and quick-drying are ideal (note that heavy boots can be difficult to dry).
- One pair closed river or waterproof shoes, gum boots or wellington boots.
- One pair of comfortable shoes for around camp.
- Socks – calf length or longer to avoid exposing ankles.
- Comfortable, casual and cool clothing for Magashi.
- At Bisate, Bisate Reserve and Sabyinyo, temperatures can be a bit chilly at these higher altitudes so an extra warm layer is advised, like a light fleece or jumper.
- Sun hat and swimming costume for Magashi.
- Slightly more formal attire for your stay at prestigious city hotels.
- Hiking sticks are provided at Bisate, Bisate Reserve and Sabyinyo.

## Equipment/Other

- Bright colours and white are not advisable as this will contrast very strongly with the prevailing forest and/or savannah colours, and could well disturb gorillas at sightings. Camouflage clothing is also not recommended for travel in African countries.
- Camera equipment: when selecting camera equipment for gorilla viewing, bear in mind the typical distances at which gorillas are viewed, the contrasting light conditions at different levels in the forest, the generally humid atmosphere and likelihood of rain, the fact that flashes cannot be used when photographing gorillas, and finally the fact that there are many interesting smaller things that may be encountered in the forest, so some form of macro lens might be helpful.
- You should also take into account the strict baggage weight limits for the helicopter transfers into the Volcanoes area.

## Donations

Should you wish to donate any of your trekking items that you no longer need to members of the local community, this would be greatly appreciated. These donations are very welcome and will be put to good use. Please speak with your camp manager or your guide, who will keep these items aside for distribution.





# Map of Rwanda

