




WILDERNESS
SAFARIS

Bisate

All you need to know

the culture



Cultural Inspiration – Exteriors

Inspired by human tradition

Bisate's architecture is inspired by the past and present of the Rwandan lifestyle. The neat, spherical structures that comprise the primary architectural features of the lodge have their roots in the rounded, thatched roofs of the royal palace of the traditional monarch.



Rwanda Inspiration



Main Area – artist's impression – with completed future reforestation

Cultural Inspiration – Exteriors



Inspired by nature

Not for nothing is Rwanda known as “the land of a thousand hills,” characterised as it is by an undulating hilly and mountainous terrain. In addition, the volcanoes that can be seen from the eastern areas, including Bisate, create a unique silhouette as their cones rear skywards.

The site of Bisate itself is a steep hillside, an eroded volcanic cone – *bisate* means ‘pieces’ in Kinyarwanda, describing how the cone was once whole but worn away by natural erosion – and the curved nature of this amphitheatre is echoed in the spherical shapes of the lodge structures.

The forms and outlines of Bisate thus accentuate the spectacular natural surroundings and capture the essence of the Virunga volcanoes that can be seen in the distance, all while bringing in the human story of Rwanda.

Cultural Inspiration – Interiors

Rwanda is a country of tales and stories to be told and shared, of traditions passed down. Each area in the lodge is thus unique, telling a story itself or providing the setting for storytelling, whether it is the main areas, the decks with their amazing vistas through the cloud-covered mountaintops or the warmly-lit bar area.



Lounge / Bar Area – artist's impression

Cultural Inspiration – Interiors

Colours and textures

The interior design is drawn from a variety of aspects of the Rwandan lifestyle, particularly the colourful textiles and use of texture. The emerald green colour in the textiles and chandeliers is reminiscent of the verdant greens of the rainforests as well as the vibrant markets that dot the villages throughout the country. The colours become moving, living hues when seen on the staff uniforms – sewn by locals using vibrant local textiles.

Following through with our commitment to the principle of recycling, the chandeliers will be of recycled glass, and the “ibyansi” milk jug motif is reused across a number of elements.



Wine Cellar – artist's impression



Bathroom Interior – artist's impression

Cultural Inspiration – Interiors

Imigongo

Many of the furnishings are decorated using “imigongo,” an art form unique to Rwanda that uses cow dung and goes back hundreds of years. The dung is mixed with soils of different colours and then painted in geometric shapes. Black and white cow hides are placed to reflect the rural way of life in the villages.



Bedroom Interior – artist’s impression

Volcanoes – background and foreground

Rwanda’s volcanic mountainous terrain resonates in the volcanic stone that is used in the fireplace and its surrounds, while natural ‘flamed’ granite is used for many surfaces.






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Bisate All you need to know
the community 



Community – The Land and its People

Rwanda is also the most densely-populated country in Africa, its population predominantly young and rural. Although the Kinigi sector of the Musanze district in which Bisate is located is the area with the lowest population density around the Volcanoes National Park (and thus why we chose to develop here), it still holds 337 people per km² – half the average density of the district. Almost everyone living here is engaged in family-orientated agriculture, growing pyrethrum (a natural insecticide) and potatoes, and other crops for subsistence. Plot sizes are tiny, but the rich volcanic soil more than makes up for this.

(Population of Rwanda: 12 million; 2014)

Community

- The Landowners and Land Purchase



What we needed

Given the small plot sizes, finding suitable land was complicated. We wanted an area large enough to hold a meaningful reforestation project, thus recreating the sense of primordial nature experienced by the gorilla researchers of years gone by – George Schaller and Dian Fossey.

We needed land that had not been settled or used for agriculture. Bisate's steep slopes and absence of habitation made it the best possible site.

Community

- The Landowners and Land Purchase



The sale

Under the supervision and guidance of the Musanze District Authority, the National Land Centre and the Tuzamurane Cooperative, we began negotiations to purchase **161 plots** from no fewer than **103 owners** to create the base for the **27-hectare** Bisate reforestation and lodge project.

Community

- The Landowners and Land Purchase

Willing sellers, willing buyers

After a year of discussions, on 3 November 2015, all the sellers joined for a celebratory payment ceremony. The injection of over \$500 000 into the local economy as a result of this purchase has had a dramatic impact. Indeed, per hectare, the price paid for the land is more expensive than land in the Sabi-Sand Game Reserve!



Community – Partners in Ecotourism



As we now know, conservation cannot truly succeed without the goodwill and support of people living next to wild areas, who bear the real costs of conservation. A way to address this is to create mutually beneficial partnerships that involve communities in the revenue stream and other benefits of ecotourism.

This is most efficient when done through a local, democratically-elected body. Enter the Tuzamurane Cooperative.

The Tuzamurane Cooperative

Comprising approximately 300 members of the broader Bisate community, the Tuzamurane Cooperative is the conduit through which all business is conducted between Bisate Lodge and the Bisate Community.

Community – Partners in Ecotourism



Bisate Benefits

Benefits to date:

- Injection of approx. \$500 000 to 103 community members in return for land purchase
- Permanent employment of 5 members in site management (supervision, tree nursery, reforestation and security)
- Temporary employment of more than 100 people in road construction
- Temporary employment of more than 100 people in lodge construction

Future benefits will include:

- Training and permanent employment of about 24 community members in the lodge
- Formation of a community trust / cooperative for equitable procurement of fresh produce and other goods from land adjacent to the site
- Village visits and cultural excursions for guests
- Children in the Wilderness Eco-Clubs, camps and bursaries

Community – The Story of Sefora



Sefora Nyiramuratwa, a member of the broader Bisate Community, was tragically widowed in January 2015, and left as the only breadwinner for her family of four young daughters aged from 12 through to 18, and a son of 20. We met Sefora when negotiations to purchase land in the area had reached an advanced stage. Her financial circumstances were dire and a Rwandan member of the Wilderness Safaris team decided to help her in his personal capacity. Financial support followed over the next few months until November when Sefora sold a portion of her land to the project and her life story changed dramatically for the better.

Taking the proceeds of the sale, Sefora bought a new – and more productive – agricultural plot, which is now farmed by her son thus supporting the family. The proceeds also allowed the construction of a house here for her son, the purchase of two other village plots (big enough for subsistence agriculture), and the construction of houses on them. She lives in one with her daughters, and rents the other to generate further income. From desperate circumstances, Sefora's story has become a genuinely heart-warming one.

Community – Jean-Moise brings back the trees



Jean-Moise Habimana comes from Bisate and is a farmer. Or rather, he was a farmer. Today, he is a proud grower of indigenous trees and a reforester of Rwanda.

When Jean-Moise became a member of the cooperative, he heard about Wilderness' vision of reforesting the area and jumped right in, immediately beginning to grow indigenous trees in amongst tree tomatoes and other crops on his own plot – and proudly showing these to the Wilderness Safaris team on its next visit. Using his own initiative, he has transformed his subsistence agronomy skills into reforestation expertise, and has even become an amateur naturalist recording tree hyrax calls, monitoring side-striped jackal pups and taking note of the natural world that is being reborn on Bisate.



Jean-Moise now heads up Bisate's nursery, in charge of planting the seeds – literally – of the reforestation project. There are currently five community employees here all working towards the goal of bringing back the trees. Our guests will join them in this thrilling endeavour, each one planting a sapling that within a few years will transform the site into an indigenous forest that is a haven to endemic biodiversity and a genuine nature experience.



Next time:
Meet the trees and gorillas