

AT ONE WITH
NATURE & THE COMMUNITY

One&Only
NYUNGWE HOUSE
Rwanda



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OUR
PHILOSOPHY

One&Only Resorts are located in the world's most exceptional destinations, handpicked for their beauty and unique cultural charm.

We are passionate about preserving the rich stories of our locations, contributing to the protection of the natural habitat, and being a valued member of our local community.

In Rwanda, One&Only Gorilla's Nest and One&Only Nyungwe House, lay adjacent to two of Africa's most celebrated areas of wildlife - the Volcanoes National Park and Nyungwe National Park.

**WE ARE PROUD TO WORK
HAND-IN-HAND WITH THE
COMMUNITIES FOR WHOM THESE
MAGICAL PLACES ARE HOME, AND
TO PLAY A MEANINGFUL PART IN
THE ONGOING CONSERVATION
AND DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS.**



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NYUNGWE CULTURAL VILLAGE

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*"Wherever you find
people dancing to the
beat, you have no choice
but to dance along."*

— RWANDAN PROVERB —



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Nyungwe Cultural Village is a traditional dance troupe from Gisakura, the community where One&Only Nyungwe House is located.

The troupe was founded in 2017 and is a part of the Nyungwe Cultural Village cooperative, the community and culture that surrounds Nyungwe National Park with more than 50 members, the majority of whom are women and young people. The Nyungwe Cultural Village dance troupe began performing for guests at One&Only Nyungwe House in 2018.

Placide Tuyisenge is the leader of the Nyungwe Cultural Village cooperative and dance troupe. He is someone who loves to share ideas and work with fellow members to make them a reality. He is thrilled to see the troupe thriving and growing, and it makes him proud of the impact of his leadership.



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INVESTING IN

YOUNG RWANDANS

“My life has changed since I joined the cooperative. We not only dance, but also support visitors to Nyungwe National Park by introducing them to local cuisine, preparing itineraries, hosting them at our lodge and guiding them through cultural traditions like *Umuganura*, Rwanda’s National Harvest Day. All these activities contribute to sustainable tourism around the park, and enable us to earn a living,” says Placide.

One&Only Nyungwe House’s partnership with Nyungwe Cultural Village began in early 2018 and today it is wide ranging. At the resort, guests can purchase unique arts and crafts made by hand by cooperative members. One&Only Nyungwe House also provides internships and weekly training in the hospitality and culinary departments to the cooperative’s younger members.

As they complete the training, they can apply the skills learned to take care of guests at the lodge run by the cooperative.

Furthermore, the cooperative has been hired to manage a native tree nursery for the resort, which supports reforestation efforts around the property.

“As a result of the partnership, we were able to establish training and development programmes to provide skills to the members of the cooperative especially in the tourism and hospitality sector. One&Only supports us by giving practical skills to our members to boost their professionalism and growth.”

— PLACIDE TUYISENGE —





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DRESSED TO DANCE

Like all dancers in Rwanda, the Nyungwe Cultural Village troupe has a traditional apparel that distinguishes them from other cultures around the world.

While performing, the troupe wears headgear known as Umugara, made out of banana leaves, a bow and shield for *Intore* (for the male dancers), *Umushanana* (the typical attire for dancers), t-shirts and hats for men, sleeveless vest tops for women and necklaces called *Inigi*.

The performers dance to the beat and melody of drums, flutes, a trough zither (known as *Inanga*) and ankle bells (*Amayugi*).

These elements are unique and not found anywhere else in the world, with each holding a specific place in the Rwandan culture.



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THE
LUNGS *of*
RWANDA

The Nyungwe National Park landscape is home to both One&Only Nyungwe House and Nyungwe Cultural Village and the protection of the ancient forest holds great importance to both the resort and the cooperative. That is why the two are working together to conserve this natural wonder of international significance.

Rick Masumbuko, who works as a tourist guide at Nyungwe Cultural Village, has been guiding visitors through the dense Nyungwe National Park for 35 years. To him, the park is more than just plants and animals:

“If I were to describe the park in a few words, I would call it “The Lungs of Rwanda” because the park is a source of fresh, clean air and adds immense beauty to the country.”

— RICK MASUMBUKO —



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CULTURAL AND COMMUNITY

EXCHANGE

Rwanda's rich culture and traditions make it stand out on the global stage and form the foundation for the strong and unique identity that Rwandans carry with pride.

"It is said that a country that lacks culture lacks identity. It's always crucial to admire and nurture our culture, be proud to represent our country, and pass on what we've learned to the younger generation"

— PLACIDE TUYISENGE —



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KORA TUBUNGA BUNGA IBIDUKIKIJE COOPERATIVE



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*“Conservation is
humanity caring
for the future”*

- NANCY NEWHALL -



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AN ANCIENT
RAINFOREST

Nyungwe National Park is one of the oldest protected rainforests in the world and home to rich biodiversity. Twelve primate species, including chimpanzees, colobus and mountain monkeys, join 322 bird species, including 29 other Albertine Rift Endemic species, 1,068 plant species and 140 kinds of orchids.

Butterflies are also common, with 120 species. It is truly a garden of Eden. The rainforest also plays an important role in the local economy and wellbeing of the community. Through the park, visitors from all corners of the globe enjoy nature and the community benefits through employment and investment.

Before the forest was designated as a National Park, however, poaching and other deforestation activities were common. Typically, men would go into the forest to hunt animals such as elephants and buffalos - species sadly no longer present in the park. Trees would be cut down for use as timber or firewood, minerals would be extracted, and the forest would be used for grazing.

Today, however, former poachers have become conservation champions and play an active role in protecting Nyungwe National Park and the unique flora and fauna that call the forest home.



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FROM POACHING TO PARTNERS IN CONSERVATION

"I was among those who used to damage the forest. I started when I was little. My Dad would hunt while I mined precious stones or cut down trees. When I grew up, I married a hunter and we continued poaching. Later on we decided to live in the forest until we understood the benefits of conservation and that there are other ways to make a living beyond poaching," says Mariya Mukandutiye, a 66-year-old former poacher.

While Mariya and her family were initially hesitant to stop poaching, they were encouraged by local leaders and learned about other ways they could support themselves.

Through awareness raising programmes led by local leaders in partnership with the Rwanda Development Board and income earning opportunities offered by local partners, the poachers came to understand why the forest needs to be conserved, and learnt how to make a living without harming the environment.

Mariya and her family joined others and decided to stop poaching. They formed a cooperative called Kora Tubungabunga Idukikije (Let's work to protect our environment) which brings together the families of 25 former poachers.

"Being part of the cooperative makes me happy. I joined hands with people who share the same goal. Before I was isolated in the forest, but now I can spend time with and learn from others as we build a better life together. I learnt how to create a life beyond the borders of the forest without depending on the precious resources in Nyungwe National Park."

— MARIYA MUKANDUTIYE —



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CONNECTED

TO THE COMMUNITY

One&Only Nyungwe House has partnered with the Kora Tubungabunga Ibidukikije cooperative since 2017, and we are proud of our deep connection with the community.

Today, the resort works with the cooperative, employing members for a range of activities including maintenance of nearby hiking trails and other facilities.

The income from this work and donations from the resort has enabled the cooperative to establish a range of farming projects to generate additional income.

“We have pig and poultry farming projects and own a plot of land where we farm. We encourage other community members to join us and we hope to expand our farming projects and continue to build sustainable livelihoods,” says Thomas Ntawurushimana who leads the cooperative.

Grace Uwingeneye, Guest Experience Expert at One&Only Nyungwe House, is passionate about community development and works with the cooperative on a day-to-day basis. “Working with the cooperative ensures the experience at the resort is a memorable one. Guests enjoy the pristine environment of the property and can also plant trees to leave a lasting legacy

at the resort. The cooperative prepares these seedlings for guests to plant during their time here.”

One&Only Nyungwe House will continue supporting the Kora Tubungabugana Ibidukikije cooperative and plans to expand the partnership.

“We want to keep supporting this cooperative in different ways so that they won’t ever think of going back into the forest for poaching. We will provide additional training opportunities, support cooperative members in their development, and continue to motivate them and involve them in the preservation of the National Park. Our goal is to foster a mindset of conservation and spread the word to the wider communities for generations to come,” says Grace.

In addition to providing income earning opportunities to the cooperative, the team at One&Only Nyungwe House are planning to do more to reinforce conservation efforts that preserve the country’s biodiversity. Through the partnership, we are pleased to contribute to the wellbeing of the community, and also build an understanding of the benefits of living in harmony with nature.



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A BRIGHT
GREEN FUTURE
FOR RWANDA

COOPERATIVE LEADER, THOMAS NTAWURUSHIMANA, INVITES
OTHERS TO JOIN THEM ON THE JOURNEY OF CONSERVATION.

“Nyungwe National Park is known as the lungs of Rwanda - this park is a source of life and the country’s development. I encourage the entire community to conserve the forest, and to our beloved visitors, I invite you to come and witness our journey of wildlife and nature conservation. There is safety here, love, great hospitality and a unique culture for you to experience.”

— THOMAS NTAWURUSHIMANA —

WE HOPE TO INSPIRE OUR GUESTS TO BECOME CHAMPIONS
OF CONSERVATION, JUST LIKE THE MEMBERS OF THE
KORA TUBUNGABUGANA IBIDUKIKIJE COOPERATIVE.



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NYUNGWE CULTURAL VILLAGE COOPERATIVE



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*“Where there’s tea,
there’s hope.”*

— SIR ARTHUR WING PINERO —



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TEA TIME

AT ONE&ONLY'S NYUNGWE HOUSE

One&Only Nyungwe House is located within a working tea plantation on the edge of Nyungwe National Park in Rwanda's southwest.

It is an area of the country famed for its lush rainforests and bright green tea fields. Rwanda's award-winning tea is grown on high altitude hillsides and has become some of the most sought-after tea in the world.

The best quality teas produced in Rwanda include black tea, orthodox tea, white tea, green tea, organic tea and spiced tea. To support the community and enhance local tea

production, One&Only Nyungwe House works together with local tea pickers from the Nyungwe Cultural Village Cooperative, allowing them to pick tea from the resort's plantation, as well as offering guests the opportunity to follow the journey of a tea leaf - from crop to cup.

Guests at the resort can learn traditional tea harvesting techniques with pickers from the cooperative and embark on a tea tasting ceremony with our tea specialists, and also visit the Gisakura Tea Factory, which is located nearby.



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FROM CROP TO CUP

The Nyungwe Culture Village Cooperative is made up of 50 community members from the village of Gisakura, where One&Only Nyungwe House is situated.

The cooperative offers tea picking, traditional dancing and guest tours. One&Only works hand-in-hand with the cooperative to showcase Rwanda's rich cultural offering including traditional dancing performance and tea picking. The cooperative also manages a native tree nursery that supports the resort's reforestation efforts.

Fred Rugamba is a member of the Nyungwe Culture Village Cooperative.

After joining in 2019 as a tea picker, he is now the Assistant Manager. He is proud to showcase Rwanda's breathtaking natural beauty and distinctive culture to guests.

Tea picking in Gisakura is the main source of income for Fred and others who live in the area and being able to pick tea at the resort provides additional income. With abundant rain in the region, tea grows sustainably and is harvested by the pickers regularly.

"Every week or two, we pick tea from the resort. I am able to pick up to 70 kilograms of tea per day," Fred says.

"Tea picking is a relaxing experience and something all visitors enjoy when we are teaching and interacting with them. When picking tea, look for the three fresh leaves at the top of the bush. The younger the leaves, the better quality tea you will produce."

— FRED RUGAMBA —



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I LOVE PICKING TEA

Tea is a very precious commodity to the Gisakura community, as it is their primary source of income and benefits every member. Speciose Nyirabagenzi also works at the Nyungwe Cultural Village Cooperative as a tea picker and loves what she does.

“I love picking tea as it provides me with an income. Through tea picking, we form saving groups and are able to buy health insurance, pay school fees for our children and contribute to our families’ wellbeing.”

— SPECIOSE NYIRABAGENZI —

When tea picking at the resort with Speciose and Fred or the resort’s experience guides, guests are shown every step of the harvesting process. Guests are provided with the traditional Intonga - a basket - to carry on their backs to store the tea they have picked. Experts like Fred and Speciose demonstrate the technique and guests also learn what happens once the leaves are harvested.

Afterwards, a tea tasting ceremony led by the resort’s experience guides gives the opportunity to savour different aromas and strength levels of various teas and learn more about the production process.

“I feel proud when I am showing guests how to pick tea and explaining more about Rwandan tea. It is my contribution to show what my country has to offer and a way to support our national development. As a tea picker, it makes me happy to see people enjoying the tea I have picked. It adds recognition to my work.”

— SPECIOSE NYIRABAGENZI —

As the work of the cooperative grows, Nyungwe Culture Village Cooperative hopes to preserve the unparalleled culture of the region, and pass on the skills of dancing and tea picking to the next generation.



