



RWANDA COUNTRY INFORMATION

THE FAR HORIZONS CONTACT DETAILS

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COUNTRY OVERVIEW

To many in the international community, Rwanda is remembered for the 1994 genocide that claimed the lives of a million people and brought the nation to its knees. Yet, since then, tragedy has surrendered to optimism and a firm determination to succeed. Strong political leadership, driving a vision of a better future has liberated the country from its past and created a plan for reconstruction of the country's social, economic and political fabric.

Visitors will find Rwandans to be friendly and welcoming, and the country itself to be breathtakingly beautiful. Despite its small size and high population density, the Rwandan Government has identified tourism as one of the priority areas of the economy, and has taken firm steps to protect and nurture the country's Virungas, Nyungwe and Akagera National Parks and their resident wildlife.



GEOGRAPHY

Country Size	26,338 km square
Location	Central Africa, 120km south of the Equator in the Tropic of Capicorn
Capital	Kigali
Rainfall	Annual avg 900-1,600mm; Wet seasons Mar-May, Oct-Dec
Climate	Temperate; Avg of 24.6-27.6° C; Hottest Aug & Sep
Altitude	1,000-4,500m above sea level; Highest point Mt Karisimbi at 4,507m
Terrain	Grassy uplands and hills; relief is mountainous with altitude decreasing from west to east
Vegetation	Ranges from dense equatorial forest in the north-west to tropical savannah in the east
Land Use	46% arable land, 22% forest, 10% permanent crops, 22% other
Natural resources	Gold, tin ore, tungsten ore, methane, hydropower, arable land
Main exports	Coffee and tea
National Parks	Volcanoes (northwest); Nyungwe Forest (southwest) & Akagera (east).

HUMAN STATISTICS

Population	11.7 million
Ethnic groups	Hutu (Bantu) 84%; Tutsi (Hamitic) 15%; Twa (Pygmy) 1%
Life expectancy at birth	Women 59.96 years, men 56.96 years
Religions	Roman Catholic 56.5%; Protestant 26%, Adventist 11.1%, Muslim 4.6%, Traditional beliefs 0.1%
Official languages	Kinyarwanda, French, English, Some Kiswahili
GDP per capita	US\$1,300

POLITICS/ADMINISTRATION

Government	Republic of Rwanda; presidential multi-party system
President	Paul Kagame
National Flag	Blue, yellow and green with a sun in the top right hand corner
Administrative divisions	4 provinces (Eastern, Northern, Western, Southern) and 1 city (Kigali)

PRACTICAL DETAILS

Time	GMT +2 hours
Currency	Rwandan franc
Electricity	230/240 volts at 50Hz
International Country Code	250
Airport	Kigali International Airport (KGL)



GETTING THERE AND AWAY

Airport Tax

For all passengers on international departures from Kigali International Airport, airport tax of US\$ 37 (or the equivalent in Rwanda francs) may be payable if not included in the price of your ticket.

Baggage Allowance

Luggage should be kept to a minimum, and is best restricted to one main soft-sided piece and an overnight bag. Kigali hotels will often provide storage facilities but please check with us in advance so that this service can be arranged. Clients on flying safaris should note that weight restrictions apply, and soft sided bags may be required, varying according to the helicopter or scheduled airline used. Please check with your tour consultant before departure.

Visas

Nationals of Mauritius, Singapore, Hong Kong and Philippines are exempted from entry/tourism visa for a period of 90 days. National from Australia, Israel, New Zealand, USA, UK, Germany, South Africa, Sweden shall get and pay visa fee (USD30) upon arrival at any Rwanda entry point without prior application valid for 30 days. Applications for a visa by these nationalities may also be made at a Rwandan Embassy or diplomatic mission in advance. EAC partner states citizens are issued visitors pass for 6 months and DRC citizens get visitors visa for a stay not exceeding 90 days. All other nationalities must apply in advance at the Directorate General of Immigration and Emigration, or at Rwandan diplomatic missions or embassies worldwide. Visit <https://www.migration.gov.rw/index.php?id=13> for more info and the application form.

PRACTICALITIES

Time

Rwanda is two hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) and seven hours ahead of Eastern Seaboard Time. For clients entering Rwanda from Uganda, please remember to set your watches back by one hour when you cross the border (Uganda is GMT+3hrs).

Daylight

Sunrise is around 0630 hours and sunset at 1930 hours. This varies slightly, depending on location within the country and time of year.

Climate

The climate is warm, though pleasantly varied depending on your location within the country, though all areas can get cool during the night because of the vegetation and altitude. Due to the strong nature of Rwanda's equatorial sun, we recommend that visitors take the necessary precautions.



Language

The official languages of Rwanda are Kinyarwanda, English, French and (limited) Kiswahili.

Communications

The landline network is small and inadequate in Rwanda but mobile communications are improving as with elsewhere in Africa. Our guides carry mobile phones that allow them 24-hour local and international communication from any town in Rwanda. On request, TFH will purchase a local SIM card and pay-as-you-go credit or data for clients who wish to stay in touch whilst on safari.

Electricity

The electricity supply in Rwanda is 220-240 volts and visitors from the United States should bring electrical appliance adapters with them. Please note that all electrical wall outlets in Rwanda are two-pin, so visitors should bring the appropriate international adapter with them.

MONEY

Local currency

The currency in Rwanda is the Rwandan franc. The current rate of exchange on the franc in US\$1 = RWF 690 (as of Jan 2015). There are money-changing facilities in Kigali, which we recommend you use, as it is more difficult to change money while on safari.

Cash & debit/credit cards

We recommend that you carry a combination of cash and debit/credit cards for convenience and security, and that you change about US\$ 200-300 of this into Rwanda francs at the start of your tour. Visitors are advised that if they are carrying US Dollar Cash with them, the notes intended for exchange should be no smaller than \$100 denomination to ease conversion into local currency at a beneficial rate (some smaller denominations can be carried to facilitate change for visa payments, airport tax, or provide tips). Notes printed earlier than 2006 will be rejected by banks or businesses, as will damaged or marked notes.

Outside Kigali, credit cards are only accepted in a handful hotels or lodges, mostly limited to Visa. Further lodges may also accept Visa debit cards but not credit cards. Therefore it is sensible to plan for making most of your payments using cash, clearing payments by card where possible if desired. 85

Drinks (extra to the full board allowance where relevant) and any extra optional activities are usually priced in Rwanda Francs, with the option of paying in US Dollars or other accepted international currencies at the lodge/supplier rate. Please do check in advance if there is any doubt about what your itinerary includes or excludes, and please see separate guidelines on tipping.



Tipping

Please see separate guidelines on tipping.

Hotel Charges

Clients are usually expected to settle their extras in Rwandan francs – please do check in advance if there is any doubt about inclusions and exclusions.

PERSONAL HEALTH & SAFETY

Medical

You are **STRONGLY** advised to take out your own medical and travel insurance before coming to Rwanda, as medical facilities are basic, and an evacuation may be required for more serious ailments than can be treated in Kigali. In case a medical evacuation is required, an evacuation from Kigali can be arranged. Please note that medical evacuation cover (to Nairobi) is included in the price of your tour as standard, unless otherwise specified.

Health

A yellow fever vaccination is required for all travelers over 1 year old. Malaria is prevalent in certain parts of Rwanda, and all visitors should consult their doctor and take the currently effective prophylactic prescribed. Our vehicles are equipped with basic medical kits for the treatment of minor wounds and ailments.

Security

Despite common misconceptions, Rwanda has had a stable government for nearly twenty years. Security measures in the national parks have been significantly enhanced. Clients should take the usual precautions when traveling abroad in unfamiliar surroundings, and we recommend that clients take a taxi rather than walk at night.

MISCELLANEOUS

Roads

Almost every main highway in Rwanda is tarmacked and in good condition. Driving is on the right hand side of the road. All transfers are carried out in 2 wheel drive minibuses or 4 wheel drive land cruisers. All vehicles are specially adapted for game viewing, and window seats are guaranteed.



MISCELLANEOUS (CONT)

Food and drink

As a rule hotel/lodge inclusions are based on bed and breakfast in Kigali, and full board on safari but our itinerary meal plans will show where we have budgeted for any additional meals required. Standards of cuisine are reasonable but vary outside Kigali. We recommend that clients drink bottled water at all times, and do not purchase food at roadside establishments.

Gorilla tracking

Please see separate guidelines on gorilla tracking.

Clothing

The emphasis on clothing is comfort. Very rarely will visitors be expected to conform to a specific dress code (unless something particular is tabled on their itineraries). If primate tracking, long hiking trousers are required, with a good pair of walking boots worn with thick walking socks long enough to tuck trousers into. Ideally a good pair of protective leather or canvas gloves should be carried in the client's day bag, to be put on should they encounter thorns or nettles as they make their way through the rainforest. Needless to say, it is sensible to pack waterproofs as well.

Safari wear should be loose fitting and relaxed in style with warm clothing for the colder evenings or early morning game drives on the savannah. Neutral, natural colours are best – to blend into the background for the most unobtrusive wildlife viewing and for practical purposes. Most hotels and lodges have laundry services, so an excessive amount of clothing should be unnecessary. Please see our separate 'What to pack' list for a guideline to what to bring.

Photography

It is hard to source good quality camera accessories in Rwanda so clients should bring all necessary photography equipment with them. Spare camera batteries are recommended, as charging facilities whilst on safari may be limited, and extra memory cards are always recommended. Flash photography is not allowed while gorilla tracking so clients should familiarise themselves with how to alter their film speed setting to a high speed (800ASA equivalent or faster) before meeting with the gorillas – it also helps to be able to disable any sonic alerts or other noises where possible.

Local people should always be asked before their photograph is taken and photographing military installations, government buildings and policemen is prohibited.