

AFRICA · WILDLIFE · HIKING · MOUNTAINS · HISTORY · ADVENTURE



Rwanda

An hour with mountain gorillas in Volcanoes National Park is genuinely once-in-a-lifetime, and Kigali has become one of Africa's cleanest, most orderly capitals. Add chimpanzees in Nyungwe's montane forest, Big Five game drives in Akagera and the beaches of Lake Kivu. Gorilla permits are limited, so book well in advance.

**The UK Foreign Office (FCDO) advises against all but essential travel to parts of Rwanda.**

Read the latest FCDO travel advice before planning a trip. Your travel insurance may be invalid if you travel against FCDO advice.
FCDO advice last updated 4 September 2026.

 CAPITAL Kigali	 CURRENCY Rwandan franc (RWF) £1 ≈ RWF 1,972	 LANGUAGE Kinyarwanda, English French, Swahili	 BEST TIME Jun-Sep
 DAILY BUDGET £45-£320 ££ Moderate	 PLUGS Type C, E, F, G 230V · UK plugs fit	 FLIGHT FROM LONDON 8h 30m direct ~£600-£1,000 return	 TIME ZONE UTC+2 standard time

Rwanda is small – a little larger than Wales – and its well-kept roads mean nowhere is more than five or six hours from Kigali. Most trips are built around wildlife: a night or two near Musanze for gorilla and golden monkey treks in the Virungas, then south-west to Nyungwe for chimpanzees and a canopy walkway, and east to Akagera for savannah game drives. Lake Kivu's shore links north and south, with the Congo Nile Trail for hikers and cyclists. Kigali deserves at least a day, above all for the Genocide Memorial.

Rwanda's tourism is deliberately high-value. Gorilla permits are among the most expensive wildlife fees anywhere, and lodges near the parks cost more than in neighbouring countries, though Kigali has good-value guesthouses and buses are cheap. The country feels orderly: plastic bags are banned, streets are swept, and on the last Saturday morning of each month umuganda community work pauses traffic. Visitors are often moved by how openly Rwanda confronts the 1994 genocide. The hills bring cool evenings, so pack layers and rain gear year-round.

Top 5 highlights

- 1

WILDLIFE

Volcanoes National Park

An hour with a habituated mountain gorilla family on the bamboo-clad slopes of the Virungas is why most people come. Golden monkey treks, Dian Fossey's grave and a hike to Bisoke's crater lake are also possible.
- 2

NATURE

Nyungwe National Park

One of Africa's oldest montane rainforests, home to chimpanzees, colobus monkeys and some 300 bird species. Track chimps at dawn, then cross the suspended canopy walkway at Uwinka, high above the forest floor.

3

WILDLIFE

Akagera National Park

Rwanda's savannah park on the Tanzanian border has been restored under African Parks, with lions and black rhinos reintroduced. Combine game drives with a boat trip on Lake Ihema for hippos, crocodiles and waterbirds.

4

NATURE

Lake Kivu

One of Africa's Great Lakes, fringed by steep terraced hills. Kayak among the islands off Karongi, cycle or hike stretches of the Congo Nile Trail, and unwind on the beaches at Rubavu.

5

HISTORY

Kigali Genocide Memorial

The resting place of more than 250,000 victims, with a sober, powerful exhibition explaining how the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi unfolded. Allow at least two hours, and consider the audio guide.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

Kigali

≈ 1.5 million people

Clean, hilly and easy to navigate, with the essential Kigali Genocide Memorial, the Inema and Niyo art centres, good coffee shops and the busy Kimironko market.

2ND LARGEST CITY

Rubavu (Gisenyi)

≈ 250,000 people

A laid-back town on Lake Kivu beside the Congolese border, with sandy beaches, lakeside hotels, a brewery and the northern start of the Congo Nile Trail.

3RD LARGEST CITY

Musanze (Ruhengeri)

≈ 150,000 people

The gateway to Volcanoes National Park, ringed by Virunga volcanoes; most visitors base themselves nearby for gorilla treks, with the Musanze caves and the twin lakes of Burera and Ruhondo close by.

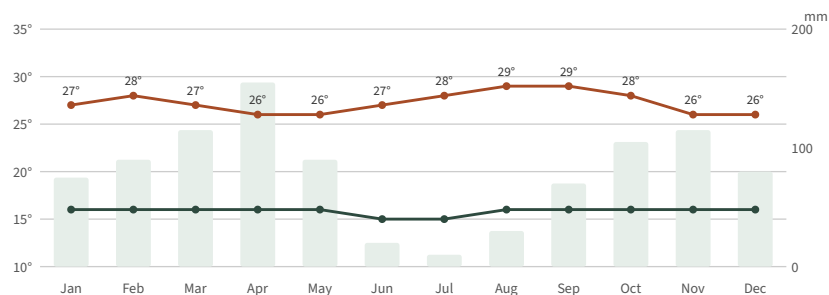
Ranked by urban-area population where available. Figures are rounded estimates, and sources define city limits differently, so rankings of similar-sized cities can vary.

When to go to Rwanda

Best time: **Jun–Sep.**

**Average climate in Kigali**

— High °C — Low °C — Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

Aug	Umuganura The national harvest festival on the first Friday of August celebrates Rwandan culture with traditional dance, drumming, shared food and community events across the country.
Sep	Kwita Izina Rwanda's gorilla-naming ceremony at Kinigi, usually held around September, names the year's newborn mountain gorillas amid dancing, drumming and invited guest namers.

How much does Rwanda cost?

SHOESTRING £45 per person / day ≈ RWF 88,734 hostels, street food, buses	MID-RANGE £120 per person / day ≈ RWF 236,624 3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis	COMFORTABLE £320 per person / day ≈ RWF 630,997 4-star+, guided trips, private transfers
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Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

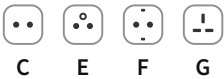
Isombe Pounded cassava leaves stewed with aubergine, spinach, onion and peanut paste or palm oil; Rwanda's best-loved home-style dish, eaten with rice or plantain.	Brochettes Skewers of goat, beef or fish grilled over charcoal, served with roast potatoes or plantain and a dab of fiery Akabanga chilli oil.	Agatogo A comforting stew of green plantain simmered with tomato, onion and often beef or goat; hearty everyday food across the country.
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Getting around

Express minibus coaches run from Kigali's Nyabugogo terminal to Musanze, Rubavu, Huye and Rusizi, with fixed fares and frequent departures. Within Kigali, moto-taxis are quick and supply helmets, and app-based taxis and card-operated city buses are easy to use. For the national parks most visitors hire a car with a driver, since Akagera requires a vehicle and gorilla treks start at dawn. RwandAir flies from Kigali to Kamembe in the south-west.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE



230V — UK plugs fit

DIALLING CODE

+250

TAP WATER

Not safe — drink bottled or treated water

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Ambulance: **112**

Police: **112**

Fire: **111**

Source: FCDO “Getting help”

TIME ZONE

UTC+2 (standard time)

DRIVING

On the right

TIPPING

Not traditional, but 10 per cent is appreciated in tourist restaurants. Gorilla-trek guides, trackers and porters, safari drivers and lodge staff expect tips.

ETIQUETTE

Avoid asking people about ethnicity: questions about Hutu or Tutsi identity are deeply sensitive. Greet people before asking for help, dress modestly and never photograph soldiers or government buildings.

MAIN AIRPORTS

Kigali International Airport (KGL), Kigali

Visas & entry for Rwanda

Shown for a British passport.

Visa required — apply before you go

You must have a visa to enter Rwanda as a visitor. As a citizen of a Commonwealth country, you can get a free 30-day visa on arrival.

Rwanda's immigration department has information on visa requirements.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations



See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Hepatitis A

Tetanus

Typhoid

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

Chikungunya

Dengue

Hepatitis B

Measles

Meningococcal disease

Rabies

Tuberculosis

Yellow fever

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

A yellow fever certificate is only required if you arrive from (or transit through) a country with yellow fever risk — not if you fly direct from the UK.

MALARIA

High risk of malaria

- There is a high risk of malaria in Rwanda: antimalarial tablets recommended.

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Rwanda

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Fri 25 Dec 2026

Christmas Day

Sat 26 Dec 2026

Boxing Day

Mon 28 Dec 2026	Boxing Day (observed)
Fri 1 Jan 2027	New Year's Day
Sat 2 Jan 2027	Day after New Year's Day
Mon 4 Jan 2027	Day after New Year's Day (observed)
Mon 1 Feb 2027	National Heroes' Day
Tue 9 Mar 2027	Eid al-Fitr (date may shift)
Fri 26 Mar 2027	Good Friday
Mon 29 Mar 2027	Easter Monday
Wed 7 Apr 2027	Memorial Day of Genocide perpetrated against the Tutsi in 1994
Sat 1 May 2027	Labour Day
Mon 3 May 2027	Labour Day (observed)
Sun 16 May 2027	Eid al-Adha (date may shift)
Mon 17 May 2027	Eid al-Adha (observed, estimated) (date may shift)
Thu 1 Jul 2027	Independence Day
Sun 4 Jul 2027	Liberation Day
Mon 5 Jul 2027	Liberation Day (observed)
Fri 6 Aug 2027	Umuganura Day
Sun 15 Aug 2027	Assumption Day
Mon 16 Aug 2027	Assumption Day (observed)

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Useful phrases in Kinyarwanda

ENGLISH	KINYARWANDA	SAY IT
Hello	Muraho	<i>moo-RAH-ho</i>
Thank you	Murakoze	<i>moo-rah-KOH-zay</i>
Please	Nyamuneka	<i>nya-moo-NEH-ka</i>
Excuse me	Mbabarira	<i>mm-bah-bah-REE-rah</i>
How much is this?	Ni angahe?	<i>nee an-GAH-hay</i>

Know before you go

Gorilla permits are limited and sell out months ahead for June to September; book through the Rwanda Development Board or a reputable operator before arranging anything else.

Plastic bags are banned and may be confiscated on arrival, so pack in other bags. On the last Saturday morning of each month, umuganda community work closes many businesses and roads.

Mobile money and cards work in Kigali, but carry Rwandan francs for rural areas; any US dollars you bring should be recent, undamaged notes.

