




RWANDA

PERSONAL TRAVEL GUIDE



Your Personal Travel Guide to **RWANDA**

Agorilla trek is electrifying. Hiking through lushly sloping hills and spotting a gorilla peeking out from the bush, or happening upon a mother watching over her babies is a once-in-a-lifetime experience that changes you forever. Known as the land of a thousand hills, Rwanda has five volcanoes, 23 lakes and numerous rivers some forming the source of the River Nile. The country lies 75 miles south of the equator in the Tropic of Capricorn, 880 miles 'as the crow flies' west of the Indian Ocean and 1,250 miles east of the Atlantic Ocean - literally in the heart of Africa. The Altitude ranges from 1000m to 4500m above the sea level. The terrain is often uneven and sensible shoes are essential.



Contents

Time Zone	1
Language	1
Kigali	1
Volcanoes National Park	2
Akagera National Park	2
Banking & Currency	3
Gratuities	3
Health	4
Safety	4
Travel Insurance	4
Climate & Weather	5
Passport & Visa Requirements	6
Electricity & Plug Standards	6
Photography	7
Plastic Ban	8
What To Pack	8
What To Wear	9
Luggage Restrictions	9



TIME ZONE



Central Africa Time
(GMT/UTC + 2 hours)

LANGUAGE

The official languages in Rwanda are Kinyarwanda, French, and English

USEFUL PHRASES & GREETINGS

<i>Hello</i>	<i>Bite</i>
<i>How are you?</i>	<i>Amakuru?</i>
<i>I am fine</i>	<i>Ni meza</i>
<i>Thank you</i>	<i>Murakoze</i>
<i>Have a nice day</i>	<i>Umunsi mwiza</i>
<i>Beautiful</i>	<i>Mwiza</i>
<i>Goodbye</i>	<i>Murabeho</i>

KIGALI

Ideally positioned in the centre of Rwanda, Kigali extends across several hills and valleys, with good road links to the rest of the country. The verdant capital city is pleasantly low key yet dynamic and progressive, with just over one million inhabitants.

First-time visitors to the bustling and colourful centre often remark how clean the streets are, a matter of pride across every community throughout the country.

No visit to Rwanda would be complete without a visit to the Kigali Genocide Memorial, which, through education and peace-building, honours the memory of the more than one million Rwandans killed in 1994. The three permanent exhibitions and burial gardens form part of a meaningful tribute to those who perished, and provide a powerful educational tool for visitors.

VOLCANOES NATIONAL PARK

“In the heart of Central Africa, so high up that you shiver more than you sweat,” wrote the eminent primatologist Dian Fossey, “are great, old volcanoes towering almost 15,000 feet, and nearly covered with rich, green rainforest – the Virungas.”

Volcanoes National Park is one of the best places on earth to track gorillas. This 62-square-mile game park is home to the last surviving mountain gorillas as well as the endangered golden monkey, a species of Old World monkey with a golden-orange patch on his upper flanks and back.

Situated in the far northwest of Rwanda, Volcanoes National Park protects the steep slopes of this magnificent mountain range – home of the endangered mountain gorilla and a rich mosaic of montane ecosystems, which embrace evergreen and bamboo forest, open grassland, swamp and heath.

Volcanoes National Park is named after the chain of dormant volcanoes making up the Virunga Massif: Karisimbi – the highest at 4,507m, Bisoke with its verdant crater lake, Sabinyo, Gahinga and Muhabura.

Tracking endangered mountain gorillas through the mysterious intimacy of the rain forest, alive with the calls of 200 species of colorful birds and chattering of the rare golden monkey, is only one of the truly unique experiences in the area.

AKAGERA NATIONAL PARK

The relatively warm and low-lying plains of Akagera comprise savannah, woodland, wetland, and a dozen lakes. The NGO, African Parks, aims to transform the National Park into a world-class location to experience a safari.

The largely open expanse is ideal for game viewing and steps are being taken to ensure that the Big 5 roam the park in greater numbers over the course of time.

With the introduction of a helicopter, canine unit, and rhino trackers in 2010, poaching has been cut to an all-time low.

A family of lions from South Africa is settling in well, and breeding successfully, and 18 eastern black rhinos have also been reintroduced. Visitors can also encounter buffalo, elephant, antelope, zebra, giraffe, baboons, monkeys, an incredible 490 bird species, plus much more.

A boat trip on Lake Ihema is also a highlight of any visit to Akagera, with its large pods of hippos, Nile crocodiles and abundant waterbirds on the island in the middle of the lake.



BANKING & CURRENCY

Rwanda Franc (RWF) = 100 centimes. Notes are in denominations of RWF 5,000, 2,000, 1,000 and 500. Coins are in denominations of RWF100, 50, 20, 10 and 5. The Rwandan franc (Rfr) is the principal currency, although US dollars are widely accepted.

Rwanda has a cash-based economy. Cash transactions can be made in either U.S. dollars or local currency. U.S. dollars should be recently issued bills in smaller denominations.

Access to ATM machines is available in larger cities such as Kigali but limited in rural areas. Cash can be exchanged at banks and private forex bureaux (bureau de change). Both are closed on Sundays and public holidays.

A growing number of places accept credit and debit cards, with Visa being more widely accepted than Mastercard. It's best to check when making a booking. It may be impossible to exchange traveller's cheques away from the capital. Western Union facilities are common.

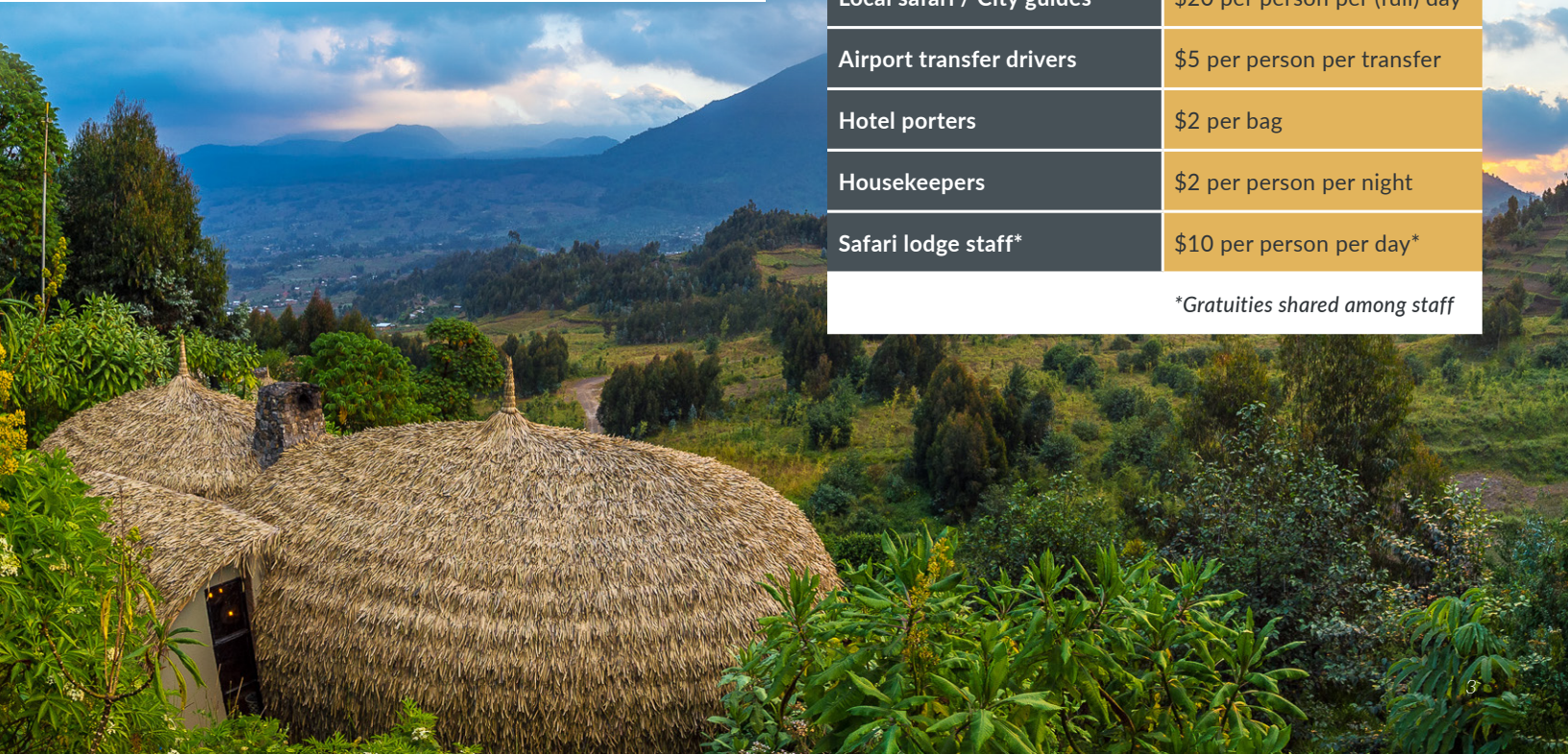


Banks and foreign exchange bureaus are available at capital cities. Most hotels and lodges accept Visa and MasterCard. In addition to credit cards, travellers should bring US dollars cash. Small denominations are recommended. US dollars are widely accepted; however older or high denomination notes may not be accepted.

GRATUITIES

If you are travelling on an independent itinerary, the cost of your program may not include gratuities. Tipping is a very personal matter and should only be considered when our staff have gone above and beyond for you. Should you feel you would like to acknowledge their service, the below serves as a rough guide. An amount equivalent to the below scale is in US dollars, per person per day.

Travelling host <i>(if hosted trip)</i>	\$15 per person per day
Gorilla trekking staff*	\$30 per person per day*
Personal porters for trekking	\$25 per person per day
Safari driver-guides	\$15 per person per day
Local safari / City guides	\$20 per person per (full) day
Airport transfer drivers	\$5 per person per transfer
Hotel porters	\$2 per bag
Housekeepers	\$2 per person per night
Safari lodge staff*	\$10 per person per day*
*Gratuities shared among staff	



HEALTH

All lodges are situated in malaria-risk areas; therefore it is essential that guests consult their medical practitioner regarding anti-malaria requirements prior to travel.

YELLOW FEVER:

Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda and other endemic countries: Yellow Fever certification required.

Please note that the requirements change occasionally and although we endeavour to stay updated we cannot be held liable for any incorrect or outdated information and we always strongly advise guests to consult their GP and/or Travel clinic for the latest requirements, prior to departure.

Note: the requirements and enforcements of yellow fever vaccinations to enter Rwanda are subject to change without notice. As a result it is prudent to be vaccinated and carry your International Certificate of Vaccination with you, even during times when online sources may indicate it is not required.

SAFETY

It is advisable to check with your guide – they will know if there are any potentially unsafe areas you should avoid. Rwandans are a very warm and hospitable nation – please do not hesitate in asking for assistance at any time.

Avoid deserted areas, particularly at night. Dress-down (i.e. don't wear excessive jewellery) when exploring the city. Concealed travel wallets are recommended.

Avoid taking pictures of anything connected with the government or the military, including army barracks, land or people close to the army barracks, government offices, post offices, banks, ports, train stations and airports.



TRAVEL INSURANCE

It is highly recommended that you take out adequate travel insurance at the time of confirming your booking. This should cover any medical situation (such as hospitalisation), as well as cancellation or curtailment of arrangements and loss of your baggage.

When you travel with Premier Africa, you are automatically covered by our emergency evacuation insurance. This provides emergency medical services/evacuation to hospital should you suffer either severe illness or an injury whilst travelling with us. As this is for emergency evacuation only, it does not cover the cost of treatment once in hospital and in no way replaces your normal travel insurance, which must be purchased prior to travel.

CLIMATE & WEATHER

Fractionally south of the Equator and with much of the country lying at altitude, Rwanda enjoys an agreeable tropical highland climate. Temperatures vary considerably between locations, but vary little from month to month.

Peak temperatures rarely exceed 86°F in the daytime or drop below 59°F at night. Akagera is generally the warmest and the Virunga mountains the coolest. The average daily temperature in Kigali is 70°F.

There are two rainy seasons in a year, from mid-February to May and mid-September to mid-December.

The dry season, from June to mid-September, sees light cloud cover and occasional light rainfall. The roads and paths tend to be easier to navigate in this period.

The best time for gorilla and monkey tracking is the dry season - if only to spare you getting drenched (you can still see them in the rain, they just get a bit grumpy). The dry season is also good if you want to see game in Akagera National Park because thirst will draw the animals to the watering holes. You will also find at this time the roads are less dangerous and the risk of malaria is lower. The rainy season is the best time to see chimpanzees and is also the time when the place is at its most lush and green.

Temperature (F) - These are the average highs and lows

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
KIG	52/85	52/87	52/87	53/82	53/83	50/84	48/85	49/87	50/87	52/85	52/83	52/85
VOL	53/79	52/81	51/80	53/77	53/79	51/81	50/80	51/80	52/82	52/79	52/78	52/76

Average Rainfall (inches) - This varies according to the year and location

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
KIG	1.17	1.37	3.22	5.1	1.76	0.85	0.29	0.59	1.7	1.76	2.55	2.05
VOL	2.93	7.4	6.74	7.94	4.39	2.55	1.17	2.05	3.4	4.69	5.67	5.27

PASSPORT & VISA REQUIREMENTS

Guests need to be in possession of a passport or Travel Document which is valid for not less than six (6) months after your journey ends and have at least two (2) consecutive blank visa pages for entry and exit stamps.

A tourist visa is required for U.S. and Canadian passport holders for entry into Rwanda.

Electronic Visa (eVisa): To apply for an eVisa, visit <https://irembo.gov.rw/rolportal/web/dgie/single-entry-visa>. The current fee for a single-entry visa is USD \$50 (subject to change without notice.) Read and follow all instructions carefully to ensure a smooth arrival in Rwanda.



It is a good precaution to make copies of all your important documents such as the first pages of your passport and air tickets and keep these in a separate place for safekeeping.



ELECTRICITY & PLUG STANDARDS

Electrical sockets (outlets) in Rwanda are one of the two European standard electrical socket types: The “Type C” Europlug and the “Type E” and “Type F” Schuko. If your appliance’s plug doesn’t match the shape of these sockets, you will need a travel plug adapter in order to plug in. Travel plug adapters simply change the shape of your appliance’s plug to match whatever type of socket you need to plug into. If it’s crucial to be able to plug in no matter what, bring an adapter for both types.

Electrical sockets (outlets) in the Republic of Rwanda (République du Rwanda) usually supply electricity at between 220 and 240 volts AC. If you’re plugging in an appliance that was built for 220-240 volt electrical input, or an appliance that is compatible with multiple voltages, then an adapter is all you need.

But travel plug adapters do not change the voltage, so the electricity coming through the adapter will still be the same 220-240 volts the socket is supplying. North American sockets supply electricity at between 110 and 120 volts, far lower than in most of the rest of the world. Consequently, North American appliances are generally built for 110-120 volts.



PHOTOGRAPHY

Flash photography is prohibited when tracking gorillas. We recommend that you bring all the photographic equipment you will need from home, including an ample supply of film, additional memory cards and rechargeable batteries. Many travellers, viewing this as their “trip of a lifetime” for animal photography, bring more than one camera in case of a malfunction. Sun filters will help block glare and heat haze. A dustproof camera bag and an air brush will help protect your equipment from heavy dust. If you plan to travel with digital photographic and/or video equipment, make certain to pack the specific charging apparatus for each piece of equipment (as well as the appropriate socket plug adaptor and voltage converter if required).

When photographing people, especially members of the local tribes, always ask permission first. Because so many local people are asked for permission to be photographed, many will expect a tip or an outright fee for this. Always be considerate of anyone’s desire not to be photographed. There are some places where photography is prohibited, and these areas are usually clearly marked.

Please be advised that the use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (Drones) is not allowed in any of the conservation areas until such time as their impact on wildlife and anti-poaching initiatives can be assessed. This rule will apply throughout Africa, as our partners in various countries and regions have adopted a similar stance.

PLASTIC BAN

Please refrain from bringing plastic bags to Rwanda. Banned by law since 2008, any plastic bags in your luggage will be confiscated at the airport or other point of entry.

"As a country we strive to protect, safeguard and promote the environment – a matter which is written in to our constitution and carefully observed by our citizens, who all participate in a community service called Umuganda on the last Saturday of every month. We respectfully request that all visitors help us keep Rwanda the cleanest country in Africa, and dispose of all litter responsibly."



WHAT TO PACK

As a general guide, comfortable, casual wash and wear clothes are recommended. Please note that muted colours are recommended for game-viewing. Game-drives are conducted in the early morning and late afternoon, which can be very cold, especially in winter.

The most practical items to pack for safari are:

- Khaki, green, beige and neutral colours (dark blue and black clothing should be avoided, as it attracts Tsetse flies)
- Shirts with long sleeves (even in summer, as protection from the sun, mosquitoes and Tsetse flies)
- T-shirts
- Shorts
- Jeans or safari trousers for evenings and cooler days
- A jacket and sweater are recommended for early morning and evening game drives
- Lightweight water-proof jacket
- Sturdy trousers
- Rain hat
- Swim and beachwear while at camp
- Comfortable walking shoes
- Strong waterproof walking boots (comfortable for going up steep hills). Pants should be tucked into socks and boots while trekking.
- Sun block, sunglasses, hat, moisturizer and lip-salve are all essentials
- Strong insect repellent
- Binoculars and camera equipment
- Small backpack to carry water and a packed lunch required.

WHAT TO WEAR

Lightweight cotton or linen clothing is recommended for most of the year with warmer clothes for cooler upland evenings. Rainwear is advisable especially during the rainy season and sunglasses, sunscreen and a sunhat are recommended year round. A good pair of walking shoes is essential.

Dress codes are informal yet respectful. Men tend to wear trousers but shorts are fine, although walking around without a shirt is frowned upon. Women will feel more comfortable in knee-length or longer.

Daytime temperatures are generally warm, so bring lots of light clothing and think about sun protection, including a hat and sunglasses. The evenings tend to be cool, and a light sweater appreciated.

In Volcanoes National Park and Nyungwe National Park slightly heavier clothing is useful. A lightweight waterproof jacket may come in handy in the moist mountains.

Avoid wearing blue in Akagera National Park, which attracts tse tse flies, and take sensible precautions against mosquitos and other bites.

When tracking gorillas, wear sturdier clothing to protect against stinging nettles, and solid walking shoes. Consider bringing gardening or leather gloves as well as gaiters.

For those who wear contact lenses, cleaning fluid is not readily available and dust or sun could prove an irritation, so it's best to bring a pair of glasses along for peace of mind.

The terrain is often uneven and sensible shoes are essential.



It is best to avoid white clothing and dark colors for bush activities as they tend to attract certain bugs. Formal wear is not required at any of the lodges.



LUGGAGE RESTRICTIONS



Maximum of 33lbs of luggage per person in soft-sided bags are allowed for light aircraft flights, including hand luggage and camera equipment. It is highly recommended that checked luggage is locked. Please do not pack valuable items in checked luggage.

