



Rwanda

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Best of Culture

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Why Go?

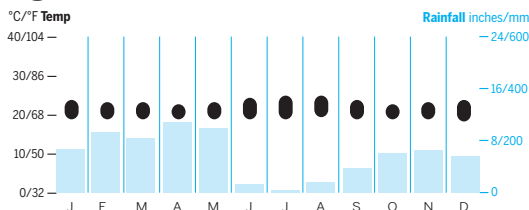
Mention Rwanda to anyone with a small measure of geopolitical conscience, and they'll no doubt recall images of the horrific genocide that brutalised this tiny country in 1994. But since those dark days a miraculous transformation has been wrought and today the country is one of tribal unity, political stability and a promising future.

Tourism is once again a key contributor to the economy and the industry's brightest star is the chance to track rare mountain gorillas through bamboo forests in the shadow of the Virunga volcanoes. These conical mountains are shrouded in equatorial jungles and helped earn Rwanda the well-deserved moniker of 'Le Pays des Mille Collines' (Land of a Thousand Hills).

So, while Rwanda's scars may run deep, now is the time to help the country look to its future and embrace its new-found optimism.

When to Go

Kigali



Dry seasons

Rains ease during the long dry (mid-May to Sep) and short dry (mid-Dec to mid-Mar).

June Baby gorillas are named during the Kwita Izina ceremony.

The long rains

Although often wet from mid-Mar to mid-May, travel is still possible.

AT A GLANCE

- » **Currency** Rwandan franc (RFr)
- » **Language** Kinyarwanda, English, French
- » **Money** Some banks now equipped with international ATMs
- » **Visa** If required, must be applied for in advance at www.migration.gov.rw

Fast Facts

- » **Area** 26,338 sq km
- » **Capital** Kigali
- » **Country code** 250
- » **Emergency** 112

Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	RFr636
Canada	C\$1	RFr602
Euro Zone	€1	RFr790
Japan	¥100	RFr741
New Zealand	NZ\$1	RFr490
UK	UK£1	RFr946
USA	US\$1	RFr601

Set Your Budget

- » **Budget hotel room** RFr5000–15,000
- » **Two-course dinner** RFr5000–8000
- » **Beer** RFr600–1000
- » **Short hop on a moto-taxi** RFr300–600
- » **Beef brochette** RFr3000

Itineraries

Five Days Spend your first few days in Kigali sampling the country's finest food and learning of its terrible past. A visit to the Kigali Memorial Centre is a harrowing introduction to the 1994 genocide but essential viewing if you're keen to gain a little understanding of this tragic event. To lighten your mood, head north to Musanze (Ruhengeri) and spend the following day with a mountain gorilla family before returning to the capital.

Twelve Days With another week, spend a few days relaxing by Lake Kivu, only a short hop from Musanze, before heading back to Kigali. To round out your Rwanda experience, check out the country's southwestern corner, including chimpanzee tracking at Nyungwe Forest National Park and a day taking in the National Museum of Rwanda in the university town of Huye (Butare).

TRANSPORT IN RWANDA

- » Rwanda has a reasonable road system, due mostly to its small size and a large dose of foreign assistance.
- » The only major unsealed roads are those running along the shore of Lake Kivu and some smaller stretches around the country.
- » The privately run buses and minibuses are more organised than elsewhere in East Africa, with scheduled (and usually hourly) departures.
- » Bus tickets are available at bus offices prior to travelling and every passenger is guaranteed a seat.
- » Most towns are small enough to negotiate by foot, but as Kigali sprawls over several hills you'll need to catch a minibus or taxi to get around the capital.
- » Taxis are plentiful in Kigali although *moto-taxis* (motorcycle taxis) are a cheaper, if slightly hair-raising, alternative.

Cultural Tips

- » These days it is considered inappropriate to ask if someone is Hutu or Tutsi. Most people identify themselves as Rwandan, keen to put the tribal divisions of the past behind them.
- » From 8am to 11am on the last Saturday of every month, the whole country stops whatever it is doing and works for the public good, cleaning streets, repairing roads and building schools. Known as Umuganda Day, you'll find it difficult to get around at this time although some tour operators may have dispensation to travel during these hours.