

GENERAL INFORMATION ON RWANDA :

Nestled just south of the equator, Rwanda is commonly known as 'Le Pays des Milles Collines' or 'The Land of a Thousand Hills' and is home of the mountain Gorillas. Rwanda is a small, land locked country in eastern / central Africa. It has **five volcanoes and 23 lakes** as well as several rivers.

- Land area: 26,340 sq km
- President: Paul Kagame
- Official languages: Main languages spoken are Kinyarwanda, French, English and Kiswahili. There are 80 trained gorilla trackers many of whom speak French or English.
- Population: Approximately 13 million
- Capital: Kigali
- Natural resources: Tin, gold and natural gas
- Average temperature: 24 – 27 degrees. Hottest in August – September
- Elevation: 1,000 – 4,500 meters above sea level
- Vegetation: from equatorial forest in northwest to savanna in the east
- Land use: 48% agriculture use, 23% forest, 20% grazing land, 9% other
- Main exports: Coffee & Tea
- Local Currency: Rwanda Franc
- Credit cards: Only accepted at few major establishments

WHEN TO VISIT RWANDA:

Rwanda can be visited any time of the year. The wet season is the best time to trek chimpanzees in Nyungwe forest as they during dry season's wander further away into the forest and consequently are harder to spot. There are two rainy seasons. The long rains from mid-February to beginning of June and the short rains from mid-September to mid-December. The main dry season lasts from June to September and is the best time to trek the gorillas in Volcanoes National Park. It is also worth noting that with the above mentioned, the climate is not uniform throughout the country. It is drier in the east than in the west and north. Sometimes the volcanoes can even be capped in snow. Kigali and Volcanoes National Park can become rather chilly. The areas around Lake Kivu are generally rather sunny and pleasant all year round.

HEALTH:

Rwanda is a pleasant country to visit and does not present any major health hazards. The main towns have hospitals although for any serious problems Kigali is the best place to get help. All towns normally have a well-stocked pharmacy although the individual traveler should bring any known personal medication along. As one always should when traveling to any remote area, it

is wise to consult your doctor 6-8 weeks prior to departure for updated advice on health care and precautions. It is strongly recommended to update personal immunization protection for tetanus, polio, diphtheria, hepatitis A and typhoid. Yellow fever vaccination is required for all visitors over 1 year of age and as the vaccination is not valid until 10 days after vaccination it is important to have this done in good time as this will be checked upon arrival to Rwanda. This dangerous virus is spread by mosquitoes and is on the increase in the world.

Malaria is less prevalent in Rwanda than in many other African countries but as it does exist in most parts of Rwanda. Anti-malaria tablets and mosquito repellents are essential.

Please drink bottled water only.

VISA:

A valid passport with a minimum of 12 months validity on arrival is mandatory. Nationals of Australia, Germany, Israel, New Zealand, Republic of South Africa, Sweden, United Kingdom, and United States of America will be issued with an entry visa valid for a period up to 90 days (US\$50) upon arrival without prior application, or can apply in advance through their respective embassies. If you decide to get one upon arrival please ensure you have the correct change with you and allow for queues. Nationals of Hong Kong, Philippines, Mauritius, Singapore and the Democratic Republic of Congo may visit Rwanda without a visa for a period up to 90 days. All other nationalities must apply for a visa in advance either online at: <https://www.migration.gov.rw/index.php?id=203>

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.

MONEY AND CREDIT CARDS:

Come prepared - how to make the financial aspect smooth during your visit.

The local currency is the "Rwanda Franc" and there are several denominations up to RWF 5,000. Be careful, as some older and newer notes are rather similar. One US\$ = Approximately 550 RWF (May 2005). There are several foreign exchange bureaus in Kigali offering similar rates, the most widely accepted currencies are US\$, Euro and to a certain extent also French Francs and Sterling Pounds. There is currently (May 2005) one exchange bureau at the airport. Banks are generally not open on Saturdays and queues can here be long and rather slow. Few establishments accept credit cards so be careful to check this before running up a bill at for example restaurants. Major hotels, restaurants and lodges do although accept some credit cards, sometimes with an extra charge added on top of the bill. Travelers cheques are not recommended.

VOLCANOES NATIONAL PARK:

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

Situated in the far northwest of Rwanda, the Parc des Volcans protects the steep slopes of this magnificent mountain range, home of the **rare mountain gorilla**, and the rich mosaic of the montane eco-system, which embraces evergreen and bamboo forest, open grasslands, swamp and heath.

An exhilarating trek through the cultivated foothills of the **Virungas** offers stirring views in all directions. Then abruptly, the trail enters the national park, immersing trekkers in the mysterious intimacy of the rainforest, alive with golden monkeys, all littered with fresh spoor of the mountains elusive populations of buffalo and elephant.

Through gaps in the forest canopy, the magnificent peaks are glimpsed, easily accessible and among the highest in Africa, beckoning an ascent. In the Volcano National Park there are now fully habituated Golden Monkeys and they are accessible to tourists since June 2003.

The Mountain Gorilla:

Around half of the world’s population live in Volcanoes National Park, including 12 habituated groups. The families are known as Susa, Igisha, Karisimbi, Sabyinyo, Amahoro, Agashya, Kwitonda, Umubano, Hirwa, Bwenge, Ugyenda and Muhoza.

A silverback (mature male) weighs up nearly three times as much as the average man which is up to 200 kgs.

The Mountain Gorilla is a distinct species from its cousin the western lowland gorilla and was unknown to western science until 1902.

Gorillas share 97% of their genes with mankind, they are highly sociable, moving in troops of between **5-50 animals** typically comprising a silverback, three or four wives and several young.

Females reach sexual maturity in their eighth year, males when they are around 13.

Gorillas have few natural enemies and can live up to **50 years in the wild**.

A female gorilla has a similar gestation period to humans and may raise up to six offspring if she live to old age.

Gorillas spend most of their waking hours on the ground, but sleep in trees, each building itself a temporary nest for the night.

In case of further questions, pls. do not hesitate to contact us!