



Rwanda: *Land of the Mountain Gorillas, dramatic jungles and fascinating cultures. Located in the heart of Central and East Africa, Rwanda is a lush country of boundless mountains and breathtaking scenery. This "Land of a Thousand Hills" is home to one third of Africa's bird species, several species of primates, and most significantly, 40 percent of the world's remaining mountain gorillas.*

ESSENTIAL RWANDA TRAVEL INFO

1: MONEY AND CURRENCY:

Rwanda's unit of currency is the Rwandese Franc (RWF): The Rwanda Franc is currently US\$1 = RWF700. Notes are in denominations of RWF 500, 1,000, 2000, and 5000, while coins are RWF 1, 5, 10, 20, 50 and 100.

It is recommended to travel with US dollars as most banks and Forex Bureaus do not accept traveler's cheques in exchange for cash.

Only banks, Forex Bureaus, hotels and lodges are authorized dealers as recommended by the company to change money. US\$ bills produced before 2000 are not accepted, while those produced between 2001 - 2005 will fetch a lower exchange rate same as small bills (5, 10, 20). ATM machines are limited to major cities; and may fail to dispense cash.

Credit cards are usually accepted at major hotels and shopping malls in Rwanda. (Except local markets.) VISA and MASTER cards are mainly accepted Kenya, Tanzania/Uganda currency is not accepted here, but can be exchanged only in local banks and Forex Bureaus. Visitors may import an unlimited amount of foreign exchange.

It is advisable to pay your extra bills and check out the night before you depart from a hotel or lodge to avoid long delays in the morning.

2: SECURITY:

Rwanda enjoys the best security in Africa, but clients must take the same precautions as they would anywhere else in the world.

Make use of Taxis rather than walking around at night. Make use of the safety deposit facility provided by hotels and lodges.

Never leave money and / or valuables in the vehicles or rooms unattended, keep them in a safe place.

3: COMMUNICATION AND POSTAGE:

Rwanda has excellent cell phone coverage. Local SIM cards are readily available in most town centre's, and cell phones can be purchased in the major towns. International phone calls can be made easily. Most towns

have Internet cafes. Hotels and lodges mostly have telephones, wireless connection and faxes. International calls may be expensive.

Remember to put the country code while trying international calls which is +250

Some mobile phone roaming services are available where we have network .

Should there be an urgent message for a client while they are on safari your Agent will pass it to our office and we will in turn transmit this on cell phones to our Driver Guides.

Rwandan postage system is very reliable but fairly slow.

4: ELECTRICITY:

Rwandan power supply is - 240 volts / 50 cycles - AC. Most plugs are French Type 2 pin round, and most lodges supply adaptors at reception for 3-pin equipment. This may require a small deposit. If there are no electric outlets in your room, the reception is happy to charge video camera accumulators for you.

Many of the Hotels and lodges have diesel powered electric generators that give the same supply. Most lodges do not run their generators 24hrs a day. If this is the case the reception giving the timings.

For those with video cameras you should have sufficient stock of batteries.

5: SAFARI VEHICLE AND ROADS

All our vehicles have been adapted for African roads. They all have pop up or opening roofs so that clients may stand up to view and photograph easily. These are only opened while the vehicle is in slow motion in the parks and stops for scenery / not on the open roads.

Main roads are paved and in good condition though not all around the country.

Rwanda is a right hand driving country

We request that clients do not stand on the seats in the vehicles.

Upon departure from each lodge please check that your entire luggage has been put in the vehicle. It is best to carry your hand luggage.

Always be on time to avoiding driving in a rush.

6: DRINKING WATER:

We advise that you stick to bottled drinking water (mineral water). Bottled water is readily available for sale in the hotel and lodge restaurants.

Primate Safaris supplies water in the vehicle on complimentary for use on the Safari and trekking.

Ice in the lodges is made from filtered water and in moderation, and is safe for consumption.

7: PHOTOGRAPHY:

Rwanda is Photographers Paradise, featuring great scenery and magnificent landscapes.

Carry plenty of film you may use more than you have estimated.

Keep the lenses of your cameras shut as dust might affect them.

Please be very careful about photographing the local people. Many of them get very upset about being photographed. If you want to photograph people ask your driver to request the people before photographing them. It is illegal to photograph any government officials in the line of their duties. The same goes for military bases, equipment, Embassies and airports ETC.

8: CONSERVATION:

In tourism it is most important to conserve our wildlife and its habitat. Without the income generated from tourists, conservation would not be possible.

It is also important that while making a considerable contribution to conservation by coming on safari you do not detriment it.

Do not feed any wildlife of any description. You are not doing them a favour

Do not dispose of any litter, keep it in our vehicles until you find a suitable bin

While game viewing, keep the noise level to a minimum
Do not collect any natural objects as souvenirs. Collecting Trophies is illegal

In all game parks and reserves, vehicle movement is not permitted between 06.30 pm and 06.00 am (night game drives are allowed in Akagera on special arrangements)

While watching and photographing game it is not permitted to approach too close

Harassment of wildlife in any form is strictly illegal

Please do not ask your driver to break the rules, he could be arrested and his vehicle impounded.

9: MEDICAL:

Rwanda's height above seas level is relatively high and malaria is not a major concern, but the disease is present and prophylactic drugs are strongly recommended. It's highly recommended that you visit your doctors at least a

month before travel.

Malarial precautions vary for each individual country. It is important to note that vaccination requirements do change from time to time and we recommend you consult your local G.P. for the latest health precautions.

The client's doctor, health department or embassy in your country of origin will have advised them on vaccinations and anti-malarials.

It's important to keep taking your anti-malarials on a regular basis even after your return home (as per Doctor's advise)

All hotels, camps and lodges situated in mosquito prevalent areas supply mosquito nets over the beds.

Please make use of them

A certificate of yellow-fever vaccination is required.

Personal travel insurance cover is recommended for all visitors to East Africa

10: CURIOS AND SOUVENIRS

While visiting the different areas in Rwanda your Driver Guides can recommend curio shops, where traditional souvenirs are on sale. Ask your drivers about what to buy
While in Kigali there are a number of shops to buy souvenirs from.

11: FOOD:

Fresh salads is safe and hygienic and is prepared to internationally acceptable standards

Give re-assurance of food that it has been professionally prepared and is safe for consumption.

12: TIPPING:

Tiping is entirely up to the client and his appreciation of good service. It is definitely not compulsory.

However, being in a different country clients expect to have guidelines to work on.

We usually recommend that there are three categories of staff members to tip; your Driver Guide, Gorilla/Chimp Guide, Gorilla/Chimp tracker and the Hotel / Lodge staff.
GUIDES Driver Guide & Gorilla / Chimp Guide - We recommend US\$10 per guest per day if the guide has done a good job.

If you have a Specialist Guide who accompanies you all the way, this could increase to US\$15 per guest per day.

Gorilla / Chimp tracker - We recommend US\$5 per guest per day if the Tracker has done a good job.

Porters -US\$ (half) per piece of bag.

Trekking Porters charge a fee of US\$10 per person.

Waiters - For drinks waiters, normally we recommend 10% of consumption.

Meals we recommend US\$2.00 per person per meal or if service exceptional 10%.

Remember this is only a guideline and it entirely depends on the service and the client's wishes.

13: CHIMPS / GORILLA GUIDE LINES

Once inside the forest, the following must be observed:-

No spitting in the park

No littering in the park

No coughing in the direction of the gorillas

Only speak in whispers

Do not point at the gorillas

Movements around the gorillas must be unthreatening

No venturing behind thick shrubs. You may surprise a gorilla.

If a nettle stings you, do not cry out, scream, shout-out loud or make any sudden moves.

If a gorilla charges or vocalizes, do not look directly at it. Stand perfectly still unless the guide asks you to crouch or move back.

Keep a minimum distance of 7 meters from the Gorillas.

ESSENTIALS FOR THE HIKE

Long pants (jeans/khakis) and a long sleeved shirt

Good well-worn hiking boots

Light raincoat

Leather gloves (there are stinging nettles in the park)

Cap/Hat

Camera (no flash)/ personal camcorder

Plenty of drinking water

Basic first Aid Kit

Med Plaster

14: GENERAL CLOTHING:

Safaris are informal and casual dress in comfortable lightweight cottons is appropriate.

A hat and a pair of sunglasses are advisable for protection against the sun

Laundry can be done at most lodges, but please make sure you hand in your laundry requirement at least a day before departure. Note: express laundry facilities might not be available in all hotels/lodges.

Light comfortable shoes such as sneakers or lightweight hiking boots are recommended

Be prepared for cool evenings at higher altitudes of Virunga Mountains and Nyungwe, where you may need a sweater and trousers/jeans.

15: CLIMATE

Rwanda's relatively high altitude provides it with a remarkably pleasant tropical highland climate, albeit also with plenty of rain.

Rwanda's long rainy season lasts from March to May, when the rain is heavy and persistent. Then from June to mid-September is the long dry season; October to November is a shorter rainy season and it's followed by a short dry season from December to February.

Temperatures vary considerably between locations depending on their altitude, but very little from month to

month in the same place. In the capital, Kigali, the average daily temperature is about 21°C.

Virunga's high altitude occasionally brings light rain showers even in the dry season.

There are lots of water masses (Lakes & Rivers) and therefore high humidity in generally the whole country.

RWANDAN VISA

Certain nationalities do not require a visa to enter Rwanda. The current exemption list includes Burundi, DRC, Kenya, Mauritius Tanzania and Uganda.

All nationalities are advised to check the website www.migration.gov.rw for the latest.

Visa applications MUST be submitted online at least 3 days before arrival as some international airlines will not let you board without it. Rwandan Immigration officials will usually have a copy of this form on their desk when you arrive, which speeds up the process.

All nationalities are advised to check the website <https://irembo.gov.rw/rolportal/en/web/dgie/newhome> for the latest Visa information and for online applications. Online payments can also be made via the same Government Portal.

Travelers who pre-pay for the Visa (online) will go straight to the passport control counters (without going through the visa queue.) They will, however, be served on first come first serve basis.

PLASTIC BAGS

The Government of Rwanda passed a law prohibiting the manufacturing, importation, use and sale of polythene bags in Rwanda on 10th September 2008.



In the whole world, you can only see the mountain gorillas (Gorilla Berengei Berengei) in Uganda, Rwanda and Congo. In Rwanda, these primates can be seen in the Volcanoes National Park. As of 2016, there were 7 mountain gorilla groups habituated making it 56 gorilla permits for visitors to Rwanda available every single day. 8 people per group can trek these endangered apes.

GORILLA VIEWING PROTOCOL

Twelve habituated groups can be tracked and observed in the Volcanoes National Park.

While tracking expeditions do not necessarily cover enormous distances, they can range in length from 1-8 km (0.5-5 miles) over very steep country at high altitudes. The undergrowth can be thick, the ground beneath muddy, and, including the time spent with a gorilla group, excursions can last between 2 and 8 hours.

Gorilla viewing protocol is based on the guidelines issued by the IUCN for great ape viewing. Such protocols are designed specifically to limit stress and behavioural impact and also potential disease transmission from humans to gorillas. They are critical for gorilla conservation.

Maximum viewing duration of any group is 1 hour per day. Maximum number of guests per gorilla tracking excursion is 8. No food or drinks can be consumed close to the gorillas. Smoking is not allowed. Do not litter. Spitting in the Park is strictly prohibited. While gorilla sightings and encounters are very reliable, viewing is dependent on variables such as weather and tracking conditions. When with the gorillas, please keep your voice low. Do not make rapid movements that may alarm them. Should you need to cough or sneeze, cover your mouth and turn away from the gorillas. If a gorilla should charge or vocalise at you, do not be alarmed, stand still, look away from the gorilla and follow your guide's instructions. Minimum age for gorilla viewing is 15 years – this is for reasons of safety but also for possible disease transmission, with children under this age more prone to infection.

- Maximum viewing duration of any group is 1 hour per day.
- Maximum number of guests per gorilla tracking excursion is 8.
- No food or drinks can be consumed close to the gorillas.
- Smoking is not allowed.
- Do not litter.
- Spitting in the Park is strictly prohibited.
- While gorilla sightings and encounters are very reliable, viewing is dependent on variables such as weather and tracking conditions.
- When with the gorillas, please keep your voice low. Do not make rapid movements that may alarm them.
- Should you need to cough or sneeze, cover your mouth and turn away from the gorillas.
- If a gorilla should charge or vocalise at you, do not be alarmed, stand still, look away from the gorilla and follow your guide's instructions.
- Minimum age for gorilla viewing is 15 years – this is for reasons of safety but also for possible disease transmission, with children under this age more prone to infection.

Again, to minimise possible transmission of human diseases, visitors are asked to maintain a distance of 7 metres (about 22 feet) from the gorillas. Guests that display cold, flu or other respiratory tract symptoms will not be allowed to track gorillas.
