

The Best of Rwanda

This comprehensive private tour of Rwanda takes in all the main sights the country has to offer and concludes in the Virunga Mountains where you can take a trek to view a gorilla family. This is a tailor-made tour which can be amended to suit your requirements.

Day by day itinerary

Day 1 – Depart UK

Depart the UK on Kenya Airlines for Nairobi (2000/0630).

Day 2 – Kigali

On arrival In Nairobi connect to the flight to Kigali (0800/0630).

On arrival at Kigali Airport you will be met and transferred to the Hotel des Mille Collines for one night (B).

Hotel des Mille Collines

Situated in a large exotic garden in downtown Kigali, Hotel des Mille Collines has 112 exclusive rooms and executive suites which include a balcony, direct dial telephone, satellite/movie channels, mini-bar and PC connection.

On the top floor Le Panorama Restaurant offers magnificent views over Kigali as well as international cuisine while Stan's Bar provides a wide selection of drinks and cocktails. Other amenities include a swimming pool and fitness room. The Pool Bar is a popular meeting place for locals and international travellers alike.



In the afternoon, enjoy a City Tour of Kigali. The history of Rwanda dates back centuries, Kigali has been a part of it for a hundred years. Founded in 1907 as a German settlement, Kigali did not become the capital until Rwanda's independence in 1962 when it replaced the colonial seat of power in



Butare. Since then, the city has seen major economic development resulting in what it is today; a vibrant African city of 1 million people. The city has wide boulevards, an international airport, world-class hotels and restaurants, craft and curio shops as well as a lively, cosmopolitan population. Visit the Kandt Museum, tour old Kigali and the craft centres, visit the genocide memorial site where you learn about Rwanda's history pre-colonial to the

1994 genocide as well as other genocides in the world.

Day 3 – Nyungwe Forest

After breakfast you will depart Kilgali and drive south to Nyanza, the historical seat of the Rwanda kingdom; visit the Royal Palace which has been restored, using entirely traditional materials, to its 19th century grandeur. The dome shaped Royal museum is steeped in history and tradition going back over three centuries.

Further south at the University town of Butare, visit the National Museum which houses perhaps the greatest ethnographic collection in East and Central Africa. View the exhibition of turn-of-the-century photographs as well as the very absorbing displays of traditional artefacts which provide an invaluable insight into Rwanda's pre-colonial history. It is the perfect place for a close look at the Rwandan Cultural heritage as it once was through poems, pictorial representation, etc.



After stopping for lunch at a local restaurant, you proceed to Nyungwe Forest National Park arriving at the new Nyungwe Forest Lodge for two nights (FB).

Nyungwe Forest Lodge



The ultra luxurious Nyungwe Forest Lodge opened last year and is located in an expansive tea plantation on the edge of Nyungwe forest. The lodge overlooks the forest canopy and is just 45 minutes from the Nyunge National Park Headquarters.

Guest accommodation consists of 24 luxury rooms in 6 wooden villas of 4 rooms each and 2 Presidential suites in separate villas. All the rooms are very spacious and come complete with air-conditioning, king size or twin beds, crisp linen, separate shower and bathtub, electronic safes, international direct dial telephone, wireless internet, satellite TV, Minibar, coffee/tea making machine, hair dryers and a fireplace. All the villas are built on wooden stilts and the rooms have views to the Nyungwe forest from their private verandah.



The spacious main building houses the Reception, lobby, restaurant, bar and an outdoor terrace for lunches and maybe after dinner coffee. There is also a swimming pool.

Day 4 – Nyungwe Forest

This morning you will enjoy a thrilling trek on the Nyungwe Canopy Walk.

From the park information centre you will descend via a zig-zag foot path to the first tower deep in the forest valley for the 1½ hr walk along the Canopy Walk's suspension bridge. Being in such a picturesque location the walk allows you access to the upper parts of the forest where you can see some unique 'canopy' species such as apes, birds, butterflies, plants, insects and many other animals that live in the roof of the forest and which are otherwise invisible but can now be seen at eye level. It is an unforgettable experience.



A true nature lovers' paradise, Nyungwe Forest National Park is extensive. The 970 km² of rainforest, bamboo, grassland, swamps and bogs in the majestic hills of southeast Rwanda is the largest remaining 'island' of montane forest in East and Central Africa. It is also home to a rich variety of flora and fauna; 200 types of trees, hundreds of flowering plants, over 100 species of orchids and sensational lobelias and 13 recorded species of primates.

As much as 25% of the African primate checklist can be found here including the acrobatic Angola colobus that move in troops of several hundred, an estimated number of 500 chimpanzees (often seen from the forest trails during the rainy season) as well as L’Hoest’s monkey, olive baboon, grey-cheeked mangabey and red-tailed monkey. Bird enthusiasts will not be disappointed with over 300 species including 24 Albertine Rift endemics e.g. the spectacular Ruwenzori turaco and several iridescent birds.



Nyungwe enjoys a cool climate perfect for the extensive network of well-maintained forest hiking trails that lead to various waterfalls and viewing points. However it is the intimacy of the rainforest that most impresses guests, the closed canopy, towering trees and delicate ferns that line the steep gorges, the mysterious calls of birds and monkeys hidden in her depths all combine for a unique experience.

Return to the hotel for lunch, in the afternoon take a tour of a local tea plantation. This is an excellent way of interacting with local farmers and to hear their stories and challenges.

Day 5 – Lake Kivu

After an early breakfast, transfer to the park for a half day trek in search of the Angola Colobus monkeys which can be found here in troops of several hundred; the largest can number up to 450 adults. The fair to difficult walk, can be adapted to suit your level of fitness and lasts up to 6 hours.



Besides their incredible numbers, Angola colobus differ from the more common Eastern Colobus by the extent of white hair and leaner frame.

Other primates likely to be seen during the trek include l’Hoest’s monkey and the grey-cheeked mangabey. The birds too are spectacular, though as in most tropical forests, one has to look harder! Giant hornbills, great blue turacos and red-breasted sparrow hawks are amongst the specials, 24 of them endemic to this section of the Rift Valley.

An early lunch back at the lodge then you will drive to Kibuye on the shores of Lake Kivu where you check-in at Cormoran Lodge for one night (B)

Cormoran Lodge

Opened very recently, the new Cormoran Lodge is situated in Kibuye on the shores of Lake Kivu and provides very comfortable and private accommodation between Nyungwe NP and the Virungas.



Five chalets principally built of timber and reinforced with local stone are located on Lake Kivu’s shores with magnificent views to the lake’s turquoise waters. The adjacent restaurant and lounge provide a relaxing main area for unwinding with an afternoon coffee or tea as you view the lake.

Kibuye lies on the eastern shores of Lake Kivu, Africa’s sixth largest lake and is located halfway between Gisenyi and Cyangugu. This is certainly one of the most beautiful spots in all of Rwanda.

Rwandan towns are typically very clean, comfortable and safe and dining out at local restaurants is a great way of meeting and interacting with the local people.



Day 6 – Virunga Mountains

The morning is spent at leisure; you can choose a sight-seeing tour in Kibuye or an activity on the lake.



Lake activities include boat trips with visits local fishing islands, kayaking, swimming in the lake, walking tour of the town and meeting local people. An historical tour - visit Karongi Catholic Church and Nyange Catholic Church two local genocide memorial churches that were scene of untold atrocities in the April-July period of 1994.

In the afternoon you will continue your journey through more Rwandan countryside to Kinigi which is located at the foothills of the Virunga volcanoes arriving at Gorilla's Nest Lodge in the evening for two nights (FB).

Gorillas Nest Lodge

Gorillas Nest Lodge is situated in a lovely rural setting at the foothills of the Virungas, in a clearing of eucalyptus trees and green lawns, barely 2kms from the Volcanoes National Park Headquarters. Constructed principally of local materials with grass thatched roofs in a traditional Rwandan style, the lodge overlooks breathtaking views of the Virunga Volcanoes and the Rwandan hills beyond.

The 22 en-suite rooms are set around an African style courtyard and overlook the eucalyptus forest, pyrethrum farms and shambas beyond. Facilities include a restaurant and a bar.



The Virunga Mountains, a branch of the Albertine Rift, are a chain of mostly dormant volcanoes which lie along Rwanda's northern border with DR Congo and Uganda. Their lower slopes are covered by montane forest which elevates to bamboo forest and Hagenia-Hypericum on the more humid slopes, in the higher regions, Lobelia wollastonii can be found.

These mountains are home to the rare and critically endangered Mountain Gorilla. Other mammals present include the Golden Monkeys, black-fronted duiker, buffalo, spotted Hyena and bushbuck. There are over 170 species of birds recorded here which include at least 13 species and 16 subspecies endemic to the Virungas and Rwenzori.

Activities include Gorilla tracking, Golden Monkeys tracking, volcano hikes and guided bird watching.

Day 7 – Gorilla Trekking

After an early breakfast you will drive to the Volcanoes National Park to be allocated a gorilla tracking group. You will be briefed by your trackers and then drive to the trail head for the start of an amazing adventure!

Your trek to find the rare and critically endangered Mountain Gorillas, the largest living primate on earth, starts in the cultivated foothills of the Virungas with fantastic views in every direction. When you enter the national park you will notice the paths littered with fresh spoor of the mountains' elusive buffalo and elephant and hear bird calls. Through gaps in the canopy the magnificent Virunga peaks, among the highest in Africa yet easily accessible, can be glimpsed.





Weaving through overhanging vines, moss-covered hagenia and giant lobelias that thrive in this tropical climate, the experienced trackers who spend their entire lives in this forest will bring you close to a family group. On sighting the gorillas you will stay with them for a magical hour as they go about their daily life, feeding, playing, resting and raising their young. Coming face to face with a giant silverback must truly be one of the greatest wildlife experiences on earth!

Mountain Gorillas (*Gorilla beringei beringei*) are a subspecies of the Eastern Gorilla, the largest living primate on earth. Numbering only about 700 individuals worldwide, this large hominid share 95% of their genes with humans and is now listed on the IUCN Red List of critically Endangered Species due to habitat loss, poaching, disease and war.

There are currently seven habituated gorilla families in Volcanoes National Park namely; Susa, Agashya, Umubano, Amahoro, Sabyinyo, Kwitonda and Hirwa. Each family will usually reside in a different section of the ranges, further or higher up the volcanoes. Gorillas are however not territorial and when two families come together, the silver-backs may fight, sometimes to death, to defend their family not territory.



Trekkers who visit one of the seven habituated families will be delighted to know that their visit contributes to the preservation of this special almost human-like creature.

Gorilla Tracking Tip: It is recommended that trekkers wear the camouflage bush colours that the animals are more familiar with, as opposed to bright and shiny colours that attract the animals' attention

Return to the lodge and in the afternoon you can enjoy sightseeing around the twin lakes, Burera and Ruhondo. The deep blue waters are ringed by steep hills and tall waterfalls and with a spectacular backdrop of the Virunga Volcanoes.

Day 8 – Kigali

You can choose to return to the Park Headquarters to spend another morning tracking and visiting a different Gorilla Family or enjoy another activity in the area such as visiting the golden monkeys or Dian Fossey's grave.

Following lunch you will drive back to Kigali and check in at Hotel des Mille Collines for one night (B). In the evening enjoy a final farewell dinner at one of the local restaurants.

Day 9 – Homeward

After breakfast, you have the remainder of the day at leisure; perhaps pick up some local souvenirs before being transferred to the airport for your departure flight.

Depart Kigali for Nairobi (1830/2100). In Nairobi connect to the London Heathrow flight (2345/0655).

The cost of this itinerary is £2895 per person, based on twin share and is subject to availability at the time of booking.

Activities -

- 1 Canopy Walk permit - \$60 per person
- 1 Colobus monkey tracking permit - \$70 per person
- 1 Gorilla tracking permit - \$500 per permit

Includes:

- International flights with Kenya Airlines in economy class inc. taxes
- Meet and greet with airport transfers
- Accommodation as described
- Meals as shown (B-Breakfast, L-Lunch & D-Dinner)
- City tour of Kigali
- Park entrance fees
- Exclusive use of 4WD vehicle and services of local guide
- Mineral water in the vehicle
- Medical evacuation service
- Professional trackers whilst Gorilla Tracking.

Excludes:

- Visa fees
- Optional extras whilst in Kigali
- Drinks throughout the trip
- Tips and gratuities
- Items of a personal nature
- Porterage
- Travel insurance – ask us for a quote.

