

# Destination & Travel Essentials: Rwanda

## I. Quick facts



- **Name:** Republic of Rwanda
- **Population:** 13.63 million (2024)
- **Area:** 26,338km<sup>2</sup>, roughly half the size of Louisiana
- **Capital:** Kigali
- **Religions:** Majority of Christians (Catholic and Protestant), Muslims
- **Languages:** Kinyarwanda, English, French, Swahili
- **GDP growth:** 11.07 billion USD (2021)
- **Main exports:** Coffee, tea, pyrethrum, tantalum ores and concentrates

## II. Travel information

### 1. Visas

Up-to-date visa information is available at [www.migration.gov.rw](http://www.migration.gov.rw). Unless there are changes on short notice, the following can be used as a general guideline:

Citizens of countries members to the following international organizations: **African Union, Commonwealth, La Francophonie**, get visa upon arrival and are waived visa fees for a stay of 30 days:

Albania, Algeria, Antigua and Barbuda, Armenia, Australia, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belize, Belgium, Botswana, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Cambodia, Comoros, Congo, Cyprus, Dominica, Djibouti, Egypt, Eswatini, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, France, Gabon, Grenada, Greece, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, India, Kiribati, Jamaica, Laos, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Malaysia, Malta, Mauritania, Moldova, Monaco, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nauru, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Principality of Andorra, Romania, Republic of Macedonia, Saharawi Republic, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Switzerland, Togo, Tunisia, The Bahamas, The Gambia, Tonga, Tuvalu, Trinidad and Tobago, Saint Lucia, St Vincent



and The Grenadines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, United Kingdom, Vietnam, Vanuatu, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

The citizens of the following countries do not pay entry visa fees and will be granted 90 days valid visa: Angola, Benin, Central African Republic, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, the Federation of Saint Christopher and Nevis, Ghana, Guinea, Indonesia, Haiti, Mauritius, the Philippines, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Sao Tome and Principe, Singapore, and the State of Qatar.

Citizens of East African Community Member States (Burundi, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya and South Sudan) do not pay entry visa fees and shall be issued entry to stay for the period of six months.

Nationals from any other country will be issued an entry visa valid for a period of up to 30 days and may pay the visa fee (\$50) upon arrival at any Rwandan entry point without prior application.

Visitors who wish to visit simultaneously the three countries (Rwanda, Kenya and Uganda) for tourism may apply for the East Africa Tourist Visa (EATV) online at <https://irembo.gov.rw/rolportal/web/dgie/east-africa-tourist-visa>, upon arrival or from Rwanda Diplomatic missions abroad. If acquiring the EATV visa before travel, your first entry point must be the country through which you applied for the visa. The East Africa Tourist Visa costs US\$100, is valid for 90 days and is multiple entry (if staying within the three countries).

## 2. Passports

You must have a passport that is valid for at least six months from the day of arrival in Rwanda. We recommend you carry your passport with you or in your hand luggage during your entire program. Do not pack your travel documents in your suitcase.

Furthermore, many countries require you to have several (up to 6!) consecutive empty visa passport pages for immigration endorsement. Please check the exact amount at the country's diplomatic mission or immigration department. The official endorsement pages (for amendments) in the back of most passports will not be accepted for immigration use.

If you haven't already, please send us a scanned copy of your passport's picture page.

## 3. Air flight arrangements

GEI is not a travel agent, and we do not deal with international flight arrangements. You will either have to make your own arrangements for this program, or we are happy to help your entire delegation identify a group travel agent who can assist you with flights, insurance, visas and other international arrangements. If the latter is desired, please contact us.

Please also note that we are unfortunately unable to assist you with any issues that might arise before or during your flights or at a connecting airport, including missed or delayed flights, problems with luggage limitations, refusals to transport you for any reason, last-minute visa issues and so on. Unless otherwise agreed upon beforehand, our services and responsibilities start upon arrival at your destination and end there. We will of course happily assist at the destination in case your luggage has been delayed or lost during the flight.

If you have not already done so, please send us a copy of your flight itinerary as soon as possible.



### III. Destination information

#### 1. Weather

Average temperature: 24.6°C (76.3°F) – 27.6°C (81.7°F); hottest in June, July, August

For weather forecast, check <https://meteorwanda.gov.rw/home>

#### 2. Electricity

Rwanda has 230-240 volts AC electricity at 50Hz. Adapters/converters have to be brought as they are rarely available in your accommodation. Rwanda's electrical outlets consist of two round prongs, but currently new hotels do have three round prongs as well.

#### 3. Telephone

Cell phones are widely used, and there are several communication networks to choose from. Make sure to check your international roaming plan to avoid exorbitant bills. Local SIM cards can also be procured on arrival for unlocked phones, and a “pay as you go” top up system works well. However, not all international cell phones work at the destination. Please contact your own service provider to learn more about international coverage and plans.

If you are interested in renting a local cell phone with a local number, please contact us at your earliest convenience as we have a limited supply of local cell phones available at a fee in most of our destinations.

The micro-SIM Card costs 1,500 Rwandan francs (approx. US \$1.50), and the normal SIM Card costs 500 Rwandan francs (less than US \$1). There are 2 telecom companies (MTN and Airtel-Tigo). Airtime can be purchased either by mobile money or directly at telecom shops or with telecom agents. You can choose different packages for internet data use. A monthly internet package limited to 1GB per day will cost an average of 24,000 Rwandan Francs (approx. US \$27). You will need to have your original passport to register the SIM Card.

International country code: +250

#### 4. Exchange rate

1 Euro ~ 1,474 Rwandan Francs (March 2025)

1 US Dollar ~ 1,407 Rwandan Francs (March 2025)

#### 5. Time

Rwanda is GMT +2 hours. This means that, in the summer, Rwanda is 6 hours ahead of EST; 7 hours in the winter.

#### 6. Money & payments

**Credit cards** are increasingly accepted at many restaurants and hotels, and you can also find many ATM machines to withdraw cash in local currency. Please note, however, that VISA is the credit card of preference! It is possible to withdraw money in ATMs using VISA and Mastercard.



New VISA and Mastercard made out of metal are not always accepted by ATMs. Other credit cards (American Express etc.) are not regularly used.

Make sure to have your credit card PIN number with you but keep it in a safe place.

For those places that do not yet accept credit card payments (including crafts markets or stores and restaurants in more rural areas), make sure to bring enough **cash** for personal spending. USD, GBP, CAD and Euros are all accepted as means of exchange. If you bring USD, it is advisable to only have \$50 and \$100 bills (smaller amounts attract lower exchange rates) that have been printed during or after 2013 (older bills are frequently not accepted). Forex bureaus and banks are available in most major cities, and your GEI guide can generally help with currency exchange throughout your trip.

Bank or debit cards that allow you to withdraw money directly from your bank account at home are not accepted in the country at either banks or ATMs, so please do not rely on this option. It is usually best to be equipped with a mix of cash and a credit card (preferably Visa).

## 7. Transportation

Rwanda's main **international airport** is Kigali International Airport.

**Taxi cars** are safe to use, generally available in most main areas of the major cities and relatively affordable (approx. US \$5-15 in most neighborhoods, depending on the distance), the first kilometer costs 1,500 Rwandan francs, followed by 500 Rwandan francs for each additional kilometer. To recognize them, look for white or white and yellow four-door Toyota cars. Hotline: 9191

**Motorcycle taxis** or "motos" are another form of transportation, and they are frequently used by locals and more adventurous visitors. We **strongly discourage their use** as they can be dangerous and are regularly involved in heavy accidents. If you do wish to use one, you'll have to do so **at your own risk**.

**Public buses** are also available in town (KBS and RFTC). To onboard any of them you need to buy a tap and go card (bus pass) which costs 1,000 Rwandan francs (approx. US \$1.20) and is available at every bus stop. When you want to top up the card, there is an agent at every bus station/stop.

You can also download the mobile app for **VW MOVE**, an innovative taxi service provided by Volkswagen that is similar to Uber. Please note, however, that it is still new; so please keep your expectations low ([www.move.rw](http://www.move.rw)).

## IV. Health & hygiene

### 1. Yellow fever

While Rwanda is Yellow Fever free, following the current active outbreak of Yellow Fever in Angola and the documenting of imported cases in some countries, the Rwandan Ministry of Health is



implementing measures to prevent the import of Yellow Fever and therefore protect the health of residents and visitors.

The following instructions are delivered to inform the members of the public and travelers:

1. To enter in Rwanda, a Yellow Fever vaccination certificate is **not required** for travelers (Residents/ Non-Residents) coming from Yellow Fever non-endemic countries and without an active transmission outbreak of Yellow Fever. Should those travelers want to get vaccinated, they can do so at the Biomedical Center in Gikondo (Kigali) at USD 9. The vaccination takes 10 days to become valid.
2. To enter in Rwanda, a **valid** Yellow Fever vaccination certificate **is mandatory** for travelers (Residents/ Non-Residents) coming from Yellow Fever endemic countries and with an active transmission outbreak of Yellow Fever.
3. For travelers (Resident/ Non-Resident) coming from an active Yellow Fever transmission outbreak country and travelers who have recently visited (within 6 days) or transited/ have a transit visa of an active Yellow Fever transmission outbreak country, the following instructions will be applied:
  - a. Entry will be allowed to a traveler (Resident/ Non-Resident) who at arrival presents:
    - A **Valid** Yellow Fever vaccination certificate (vaccinated 10 days before traveling)
    - No fever (less than 38.5 C)
    - Consents to self-report for any symptoms for 6 days.
  - b. Traveler (Resident/ Non-Resident) who has fever (more than 38.5 C) on arrival will be allowed to enter in Rwanda **If** she/he consents for isolation and further investigation of yellow fever.
  - c. Traveler (Resident/ Non-Resident) with invalid yellow fever vaccination certificate (**less than 10 days after vaccination**) will be **quarantined** until the certificate becomes valid.
  - d. Traveler (Resident/ Non-Resident) coming from countries with active Yellow Fever transmission or known endemic country without yellow fever vaccination certificate will be vaccinated at entry (at own cost equivalent to **40 USD**). **In this case, the traveler will have to be quarantined for at least 10 days or until the vaccination becomes valid.**
  - e. **No entry will be allowed** to travelers (Resident/ Non-Resident) who do not consent to preventive measures mentioned above.
  - f. The **cost** related to quarantine and vaccination **will be borne/ covered** by the traveler.

Please also note that in cases where doctors advise against taking the vaccination for other medical reasons and are willing to issue a certificate to this effect, there is no general rule that visitors with a doctor's certificate will be allowed to enter the country. We therefore strongly advise against trying and we will not take any responsibility if a client of ours fails to enter despite a doctor's certificate.

**Countries with risk of Yellow Fever transmission and countries requiring Yellow fever vaccination:**

**African region:** Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroun, Central Africa Republic, Chad, Republic of Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Mauritania, Niger, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Soudan, Sudan, Togo, Uganda.

**Central and South America:** Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, French Guiana, Guyana, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Venezuela.



**Countries with low potential risk of Yellow Fever transmission:** Eritrea, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Somalia, Tanzania, Zambia.

Other vaccinations, such as hepatitis A/B, typhoid, meningococcal meningitis and rabies, as well as tetanus, diphtheria and polio may be advisable depending on your program.

Since we are not medical authorities, please consult your personal doctor at least 8 weeks before departure and act on his or her recommendation. Comprehensive information can be found on the CDC website for Rwanda <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/rwanda>

## 2. Malaria

Malaria is rare in Kigali but remains a health issue in other parts of Rwanda, so you may wish to consult your doctor at least 4 weeks before the program about the most appropriate anti-malarial drug for you. In addition, try to prevent mosquito bites between dusk and dawn by using DEET-based insect-repellent and a bed net.

## 3. Prescription drugs

If you take prescription drugs, ensure that you bring a copy of the prescription with you.

## 4. Water & food safety

Water should always be boiled or treated before drinking. Alternatively, bottled water is safe and widely available. To reduce plastic waste, we encourage you to bring and use a refillable water bottle. Some people also choose to brush their teeth with clean drinking water, but this is up to personal preferences based on how hardy you feel your stomach is. Do not use ice, unless you know it was made from clean drinking water.

Visitors should be cautious when eating raw vegetables or salads that may have been washed in local water. Fruits you can peel are usually safe (i.e. bananas). Food should always be eaten freshly cooked. Remember the traveler's mantra: "Boil it, cook it, peel it or forget it."

## 5. Hospitals

- King Faisal Hospital (Kacyiru, Kigali): +250 788 123 200, +250 (0)252-585397, +250 (0)252-582469
- Ambulance: +250 (0)788-690438 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm), +250 (0)788-530351 (all other times)
- Polyclinique du Plateau (Nyarugenge, Kigali): +250 (0)252-578767, +250 (0)252-572125
- Bio Medical Center – Dr. Alphonse Karagirwa: +250 (0)788-305005
- Ada Dental Clinic: +250 (0) 788 843 901
- Pineda Dental Clinic: + 250 (0)788-564377
- Clinique Dentaire Adventiste: + 250 (0)252-582431
- Legacy Clinics: +250788 122 100

## 6. General fitness

It is important that you are in reasonably good health. There are activities in the program that might require a fair amount of walking. Delegates who require assistance may not be able to fully participate or access some sites. Please note that the motor coaches and the vast majority of sites, buildings and restaurants on the itinerary are not wheelchair accessible. Please consult with





us in advance if you feel this may be an issue for you. Rwanda have facilitated sports including a mass sport day known as Car Free Day that take place in 2 Sundays in a month.

## **7. Travel medical insurance**

Appropriate travel medical insurance and insurance for return transport to your home country are required. COVID-19 insurance is highly recommended. Remember to carry your insurance card and policy details with you. If you haven't already, please send us a scanned copy of the insurance.

## **1. Travel planning**

### **1. Packing list**

In your handbag/money belt: Wallet, personal ID, passport, air tickets, luggage key, emergency phone numbers

In your carry-on: Light jacket, personal journal and pen, Kleenex tissue pack, toiletries for flight (in 100ml containers, total not exceeding 1l), personal medicines, photocopy of passport and tickets, all electronic equipment (including cameras, extra batteries for camera or camera charger, phone charger, video recorders, laptops etc.)

In your checked luggage: Clothes (see below), comfortable walking shoes, toiletries (including a high factor sunscreen), insect repellent, travel raincoat, sun hat, alarm clock.

Please check applicable baggage allowance policies with your airline(s) prior to packing and departure, also for any domestic flights.

### **2. Clothes**

Light clothing for the warm days and mild evenings and heavier clothing including solid walking shoes especially for excursions in the national parks are appropriate. Generally, it is a good idea to bring clothes that can be layered. A hat and sunglasses provide protection against the sun. A waterproof jacket may come in handy in the mountains or during the rainy season. Many of the places visited are rural and the ground is usually uneven and muddy if it has been raining. It is important to wear sensible footwear for these visits.

Rwandans take pride in their appearance, and most people in business and government are smartly attired. Long microfiber pants or skirts and shirts or blouses are appropriate for most casual program days. However, if you participate in business or government meetings or a formal conference, business clothes (dress pants, blazers, professional skirts, dress shoes etc.) will be required. We recommend that you pack at least one complete professional outfit for such meetings. Please note particularly that short pants or skirts are inappropriate for most meetings and should also be avoided when traveling outside of Kigali in order to respect the local culture. Any safari-style wear, running shoes or flip flops are not appropriate for professional meetings. Please dress and behave as you would if you were meeting business or government officials from your own country.

### **3. Hotels facilities**

The hotels offered have been selected according to your delegation's desired standards and budget. Please familiarize yourself with available facilities in advance on your hotel's website in



order to be aware of facilities on offer. For example, only high-end hotels will offer swimming pools and recreation facilities. Most hotels usually offer free WIFI (wireless internet) at least in public areas; however, be forewarned that connection speeds can be slow. Please use hotel safes for all your valuables. If private safes are unavailable in your room, ask for a general hotel safe.

#### 4. Restroom facilities

There are a variety of restrooms that you will need to deal with. Regular western style toilets are available at the hotels and most restaurants. The second form is what is known as a bucket flush where there is a toilet but no running water, so that a bucket of water is provided to pour into the toilet. The third type is a pit toilet where there is nothing but a hole in the ground and two bricks to locate your feet. The last option is the bush. Please bring your own tissues and hand sanitizer along, as frequent use of this is the best defense against common bugs.

#### 5. Transport

The vehicles chosen for your program – especially the coaster bus – are going to be comfortable, among the best that the country has to offer. But please do not expect them to have a standard found in motor coaches in Western countries; for example, do not have toilet facilities on board. While we always try to limit the time that you spend on the vehicles, some distances may require several hours of driving. Please study the itinerary in detail and prepare yourself accordingly.

## 2. Local customs & culture

### 1. Social & cultural norms

Rwandan culture is quite unique and there are some things first-time travelers to the country will need to observe.

**Social sensitivity:** Participants should never ask about an individual's ethnicity in Rwanda. Since the genocide against Tutsi in 1994, ethnic divisions are discouraged in both thought and discussion, and the national government has prioritized the promotion of the concept of "one Rwanda, one people". It is considered a deeply sensitive topic and should not be approached lightly by any outside visitors, even with the best intentions, unless done so in a very broad and diplomatic sense when talking about post-genocide peace and reconciliation efforts. Any direct reference to specific ethnic groups should be avoided at all costs, and they could result in financial penalties and imprisonment.

**Handouts and donations:** Please do not give anything to people you meet randomly – no sweets, cookies, empty water bottles, pens or even money – since this encourages a culture of begging and hassling. Our desire is to encourage a culture of entrepreneurship, service provision and targeted help rather than uncoordinated handouts. If you would like to make a donation (e.g. school supplies, medicines etc), please make arrangements with us prior to your program if at all possible.

**Environmental protection:** Please note that Rwanda has prohibited the use of plastic bags. Make sure not to carry any plastic bags with you, including in your luggage. It is possible that authorities ask you to open your luggage upon arrival to search for plastic bags. Visitors found with plastic bags may be fined or imprisoned depending on the seriousness of the offense.

**Sustainability:** We have a strong commitment towards sustainability.





**Photography:** Please always ask your guide when it is appropriate to take photos beforehand. Never take photos during a meeting or discussion session without prior permission and approval of all participants. In many cases, taking photos will be permissible and even welcomed, with the exception of military personnel and government property as well as public buildings, such as the airport. Please always do so in a sensitive and dignifying way. Children tend to enjoy photos, but permission should also be sought from individuals beforehand so as to remain respectful.

**Drones:** The use of drones is strictly regulated, and a permit is required. You can find more information at [www.visitrwanda.com/facts/drones](http://www.visitrwanda.com/facts/drones). Obtaining a permit typically requires that you have a local “sponsor”. Please note that such sponsorship frequently leads to questioning by the authorities and leaves your local sponsor in a complicated and potentially vulnerable position. As a result, we are sorry to say that we generally cannot make our local colleagues available as such local sponsors. We will also not take any responsibility for your drones, whether brought into the country legally (i.e. with a permit) or not.

**Satellite phones:** The import and use of satellite phone is prohibited.

**Alcohol and drugs:** Reckless abuse of alcohol is not acceptable. We encourage the participants of our programs to see themselves as ambassadors of their own countries and institutions, and to respect Rwandan culture and community. Public drunkenness or consuming alcohol in inappropriate or illegal places is strictly forbidden. Illegal drugs (marijuana etc) are strictly monitored in Rwanda and come with heavy fines and prison sentences. GEI will not take any responsibility for any program participant who is found to be breaking Rwandan law while participating in one of our programs.

**Affection:** Public displays of affection are not seen in most areas of Rwanda and can be embarrassing to locals. We suggest you refrain from kissing, holding hands (man/woman) or engaging in any other forms of affection in public. Hand-holding among men is quite common in Africa as a sign of friendship.

**Smoking:** Smoking is prohibited in all public places.

## 2. Food & drink

### Local food:

Lunch buffet : 3,000-8,000 Rwandan francs (approx. US \$4-6)

### Western food:

Fast food meal: 7,000-12,000 Rwandan francs (approx. US \$6-10)

Pizza: 8,000-15,000 Rwandan francs (approx. US \$7-12)

### Drinks:

Coffee: 3,000-4,000 Rwandan francs (approx. US \$5)

Bottle of mineral water (500ml): 800-1,200 Rwandan francs (approx. US \$1)

Locally produced soda: 800-1,500 Rwandan francs (approx. US \$1-2)

Simba supermarket is currently the biggest supermarket chain in Kigali. It has branches in the city center (Centenary House), Gishushu, Kicukiro, Kisimenti and Kimironko. Opening hours are 24/7 (Gishushu) or 7am-11pm (Centenary House & Kicukiro).

## 3. Community service “UMUGANDA”

Every last Saturday of the month is reserved for the community service called “Umuganda”. It generally takes place from 8-11am. All businesses are closed, and no public and private



transportation (including taxis) are available, unless officially approved by local government or police with a special written pass.

#### 4. Safety

Rwanda is amongst the safest countries in Africa, and it is generally safe to walk in the streets of Kigali and other cities, towns and villages. That said, we always recommend watching your wallet and purse in crowded areas, as pickpockets do exist. We also recommend avoiding travelling at night.

#### 5. Language

While Kinyarwanda, English and French are the official languages, the majority of Rwandans are fluent only in Kinyarwanda. Since English has been introduced as language of instruction in schools, English is slowly becoming more widely spoken. Using a few words of Kinyarwanda with a smile will always inspire a warm welcome. Here are some useful words:

English	Kinyarwanda	English	Kinyarwanda
Hello	Muraho	Thank you	Murakoze
Goodbye	Murabeho	My name is...	Nitwa...
How are you?	Amakuru?	How much?	Ni angahe?
I am fine	Ni meza		

#### 6. Official holidays

January 1: New Year's Day

January 2: Day after New Year's Day

February 1: National Heroes Day

Good Friday: Friday before Easter Sunday

Easter Monday: Monday after Easter Sunday

April 7: Genocide against the Tutsi Memorial Day

May 1: Labor Day

July 1: Independence Day

July 4: Liberation Day

Friday of first week of August: Umuganura Day

August 15: Assumption Day

December 25: Christmas Day

December 26: Boxing Day

Eil El Fitr: Date to be announced each year by Rwanda Moslems Association

Eid Al-Adha: Date to be announced each year by Rwanda Moslems Association