

Abercrombie & Kent  
EAST AND SOUTHERN AFRICA

RWANDA





## COUNTRY INFORMATION, FACTS & ADVICE

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### Rwanda

Rwanda is famed for its thrilling gorilla tracking on northern volcanic slopes crinkled with lush valleys. Yet, there's an awful lot more to this beautiful, wonderfully friendly central Africa state. From startlingly tranquil lakes to misty rainforest and rolling grass plains, the country dubbed 'The Land of a Thousand Hills' is a landlocked jewel. The lush forest and bamboo of Parc National des Volcans, part of the cross-border Virunga Conservation area, hosts five families of gorillas - and sitting alongside them is the reward for a hearty tramp through verdant undergrowth. In the Southwest the Nyungwe National Park's mist-swaddled rainforest is alive with 13 species of primate and 300 species of birds including the strange and exquisite Rwenzori Turaco. To the east the rolling plains of the Akagera National Park are another ornithological hotspot, while to the west Lake Kivu's ribbon of startlingly blue water ringed by white sand offers some divine R'n'R. Poured over several hills, the capital, Kigali has emerged from the terrible civil war of the 1990s to become one of Africa's cleanest, most interesting capitals.

### Getting into Rwanda

All visitors, except nationals of a few exempted countries, require a Visa to enter Rwanda. Check here for nationalities that require a visa: <https://www.migration.gov.rw/visa>.

Citizens of all other countries can get a visa upon arrival at the port of entry or prior to arrival online or at the local embassy or high commission. Apply for a visa online at <https://www.migration.gov.rw/visa/visitors-visa>. The entry visa fee is valid for a period of up to 30 days. Citizens of COMESA member states can get a 90-day visa on arrival on payment of the prescribed fee.

The Government of Rwanda has waived visa for holders of Diplomatic and Service Passports from the following countries: Djibouti, Ethiopia, Gabon, Guinea, India, Israel, Morocco and Turkey.

The East Africa Tourist Visa allows entry to Rwanda, Uganda and Kenya. Applications should be made in advance with the country to be entered first. For Rwanda, applications can be made with the Directorate General of Immigration and Emigration or at any Rwandan Embassy or Diplomatic Mission, or online.

### Keeping Healthy in Rwanda

**Yellow Fever:** 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.

A valid Yellow Fever vaccination certificate is mandatory for travelers (Residents/ Non-Residents) coming from Yellow Fever endemic countries with active Yellow Fever transmission outbreaks. These include Kenya and Uganda. For the full list of endemic countries, [click here](#).

**Malaria:** Malaria is prevalent in certain parts of Rwanda, and all visitors should consult their doctor and take the currently effective prophylactic prescribed. In addition, other personal protective measures, such as the use of insect repellents, covering arms and legs after dusk and avoiding the use of scented products can help to reduce malaria risk.

Avoid using tap water for drinking or brushing teeth. Most hotels, camps and lodges use boiled and filtered water or bottled water to make ice but if you have any concerns please ask the manager.

Bottled water is provided in all properties and it is advisable to drink plenty of water to stay hydrated especially during the hot seasons.

It is also suggested that you bring a smaller traveller's kit with remedies for minor stomach ailments or motion sickness. You should include an adequate supply (in your hand luggage) of any prescribed medication you may require while traveling.

Travellers with physical disabilities and those who require frequent or on-going medical attention should advise Abercrombie & Kent of their health situation at the time of booking (or at the time such a situation occurs should this be after the reservation is made).

We do recommend that you take out comprehensive travel insurance to cover you in the event of a medical emergency.

### **Tipping**

Tipping is not compulsory, in Rwanda. You are travelling on an independent itinerary and the cost of your program does not include gratuities. Tipping is a very personal matter and should only be considered when the staff have gone above and beyond for you. Should you feel you would like to acknowledge their service, please consider the following as a rough guide, per person per day.

Type of Service	Group Size (Number of People)					
	1	2	3	4	5-9	10+
Tour Director (Per group, per day)	20	20	20	20	20	20
Gorilla Tracking Guide (per person per trek)	20	20	20	20	20	20
Driver/ Guide Per group, per day	15	15	15	15	15	15
Baggage Porters (per person)	2	2	2	2	2	2
Porters on Gorilla Tracking (per porter per day)	10	10	10	10	10	10

**Please note:** Currency is in USD

*The above tipping guidelines are recommendations only and are not compulsory. Please use your own discretion in tipping, based on quality of service.*

### **Restaurants**

It is customary to add about 10% of the bill in restaurants, if the service has been satisfactory.

### **Taxis**

Taxi drivers do not expect to be tipped but they appreciate the fare being rounded up.

### **Porterage**

If you are being transferred by an Abercrombie & Kent representative to a hotel, then porterage and tipping of porters is already included. If you are travelling with more than 2 pieces of baggage, an additional tip of USD1 per bag is recommended.

### **Guardian Angels**

Transfer assistance is at your discretion but if a Guardian Angel performs a special service for you, it would be appropriate to tip him or her the same rate you would tip a hotel concierge for similar assistance.

### On a Gorilla Track

If you choose to take a porter (highly recommended), the minimum recommended tip is USD20` per traveller per track. Guides (usually 1 per group), Trackers (usually 2-3 per group) and Security personnel (usually 2-4 per group) do earn salaries. A recommended tip of about USD20 per day of tracking per traveller may be placed in the appropriate tip box for your gorilla group (found at Park Headquarters) for distribution amongst the staff.

### Talk the talk in Rwanda

Kinyarwanda is the official language in Rwanda, although French, English is widely spoken and understood.

English	Kinyarwanda
Welcome	Murakaza neza
How are you?	Amakuru?
Have a nice day	Umunsi Mwiza
Have a nice meal	Muryoherwe
Thank you	Murakoze
How much?	Nangahe?
I don't understand	Simbyumva
Food	Ibiribwa
A drink	Ibinyobwa
Yes	Yego
No	Oya
Beer	Ibyeri
Money	Amafaranga
I want	Ndashaka
Lower the price	Gabanya

### Weather in Rwanda

Due to a combination of tropical location and high altitude ensures that most of Rwanda has a temperate year-round climate. Temperatures rarely stray above 30 degrees Celsius by day or below 15 degrees Celsius at night throughout the year. The exceptions are the chilly upper slopes of the Virunga Mountains, throughout the country, seasonal variations in temperature are relatively insignificant. Most parts of the country receive in excess of 1,000mm of precipitation annually, with the driest months being July to September and the wettest February to May.

This is a guideline only and unseasonal weather can occur so you should pack with a degree of flexibility in mind.

### What to Pack

Casual and comfortable clothing is most useful. It is certainly not necessary to bring a separate change of clothing for each day and evening, and it is recommended that you keep luggage to a minimum for your own comfort and ease of transport, especially if you are using light aircraft transfers.

- Casual lightweight cotton, khaki or neutral coloured clothes for safari
- Fleece or sweater and a warm jacket for game drives or cool evenings
- Light raincoat and/or fold-up umbrella
- Swimsuit, scarf or bandana, kanga or sarong
- Wide brimmed hat/cap

- Personal toiletries, sun barrier creams; lip balm and insect repellent
- Binoculars, camera, flashlight and accessories (including any batteries and extra memory cards)
- Sunglasses and prescription glasses
- Soft-sided luggage and fold-up daypack or shoulder pack to carry items
- Travel detergent
- Comfortable walking shoes with soft soles and beach sandals

Please note that all luxury hotels and most game lodges offer a same-day laundry service (at additional charges). This is a good reason not to pack too many clothes.

### **Gorilla Tracking**

Do not forget a windbreaker or a light raincoat. When tracking for gorillas you will be in a rain forest, so it will more likely than not, rain. You will need good hiking boots and a hat if you are gorilla tracking. Garden gloves, to avoid stinging nettles, and gators, are recommended.

### **Avoiding the Baggage Blues**

- Baggage allowances vary according to airline – check your airline for details. Most domestic scheduled and private charter flights to destinations within East Africa have a baggage allowance of 15 kilos per person only which must be in soft bags. This special weight restriction is strictly adhered to. Suitcases of dimensions greater than 24" x 17" x 7" are impossible to load onto light aircraft or in safari vehicles.
- Do NOT pack or bring prohibited items to the airport – check the airports relevant to your trip. **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.
- Make sure there is contact information inside your bags as well as outside
- In case your luggage is delayed make sure you pack essential supplies such as medication, contact lenses, toiletries, etc. in your carry-on bag.
- Please be advised that regulations at most international points of arrival do not permit passengers to be assisted with baggage handling inside secured passenger areas.

### **Religion & Etiquette**

Rwanda is a predominantly Christian country.

### **Photography**

The choice of camera accessories is very limited, although most types of film is now available in Kigali. Flash photography is not allowed while gorilla tracking, and clients should bring their own high-speed film to compensate for this. Clients should also bring a sufficient supply of batteries, as recharging is sometimes impossible on safari. Local people should be asked before their photograph is taken. Photographing military installations, government buildings and policemen is prohibited.

### **Drones**

A permit is required to fly a drone recreationally or commercially in Rwanda. Permits are issued by the Rwanda Civil Aviation Authority. Foreign citizens are unable to register drones themselves – a Rwandan citizen, permanent resident or body / entity may register a drone on behalf of a foreign citizen.

Basic rules:

- Do not fly your drone over people or large crowds.
- Respect others privacy when flying your drone.
- Do not fly your drone over airports or in areas where aircraft are operating.
- You must fly during daylight hours and only fly in good weather conditions.

- Do not fly your drone in sensitive areas including government or military facilities. Use of drones or camera drones in these areas are prohibited.

## **Money in Rwanda**

### **Currency**

The unit of currency is the Rwanda franc. The US dollar is the hard currency of preference.

### **Foreign Exchange**

We urge you to try to spend all of your Francs while you are in Rwanda because the reverse exchange rate from Francs is very unfavourable. Be aware that only paper currency will normally be accepted for exchange. Very few places in Rwanda accept either credit cards. Only the major hotels in Kigali plus a few airlines accept them. There are money-changing facilities in Kigali, which we recommend you use, as it is more difficult to change money while on safari. Visitors are advised that if they are carrying US Dollar Cash with them, the notes should be no smaller than \$100 denomination, and should have been issued no earlier than 2000. We recommend that you carry cash for convenience and security, and that you change about US\$200-300 of this into Rwanda francs at the start of your tour. Cash is more easily exchanged in Rwanda, as many facilities are very reluctant to accept payment by traveller's cheque.

### **Time Zone in Rwanda**

The time zone in Rwanda is GMT +2 hours throughout the year.

### **Local Food & Drink in Rwanda**

The diet for most local Rwandese people consists mainly of sweet potatoes, peas, corn, beans, millet and fresh fruit, including avocados, mangos and papayas. Drinks include local beer and ikigage, a locally brewed beer made from sorghum. We recommend that clients drink bottled water at all times, and do not purchase food at roadside establishments

**We suggest you try** Umutsima (cassava and corn), isombe (cassava leaves with eggplant and spinach) and mizuzu (fried plantains) which are some of Rwanda's traditional dishes.

### **Shopping in Rwanda**

Wood carvings such as traditional masks, raffia work baskets, mobiles and jewellery, musical instruments, paintings, batik, bags, scarves and beading are among the most popular souvenir purchases in Rwanda.

In places where prices are not marked, bargaining is usually an accepted practice.

As a courtesy to our clients, our office will, if requested, help refer you to a shop that carries the merchandise you are looking for. This is not intended as A&K's endorsement of the shop nor responsibility for merchandise (or shipping arrangements) purchased from the shop.

- **Bring your purchases home with you.** Unless you are prepared to wait up to a year to receive your merchandise, do not have it shipped - not even by air freight.
- **Do not purchase expensive goods of supposed high quality unless you are absolutely sure of what you are buying** (or unless you like the item enough to buy it even if it is not authentic or as valuable as you thought). Unless you are an expert in gems, antiques, artefacts etc. do not assume

that the quality and/or value of your purchase is as represented by the vendor, even if you have been referred to the shop by A&K. ABERCROMBIE & KENT does not profess to employ experts in the quality and/or value of retail or wholesale merchandise.

- **Always take the time to read the charge slips for credit card purchases before you sign them.** This may seem obvious; but in the excitement of making a foreign purchase, shoppers sometimes overlook this and are unpleasantly surprised when they return home and are billed by the credit card company. Taking a few moments to review the charge slip before signing it (and computing the exchange rate to be sure you are charged the right amount) can save you headaches later.

For purchases made abroad that are being hand-carried home, keep all sales receipts with you (in your hand luggage). It is also suggested that you pack all of your foreign purchases together in one bag (separate from your other personal belongings). You might consider bringing some "bubble wrap" and string for packing any fragile merchandise you purchase while traveling.

Please note that the purchase of "national treasures" for export from any country is strictly illegal and that the onus rests entirely on the buyer. In addition, U.S. and Canadian Customs prohibit the importation of any products made from endangered species of wildlife. If you are approached by someone offering this type of "curio" for sale, do not buy it. International agreements are such that, if you are caught with such a restricted item, it will almost certainly lead to prosecution.