Destination Showcase:

Rwanda

The land of the thousand hills

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Rwanda

Rwanda is a small country in East Africa. The Democratic Republic of Congo lies to its west, Uganda to its north and Burundi to the south. Rwanda also shares its eastern border with Tanzania.

Rwanda has three official languages: Kinyarwanda, French and English. The majority of the population speaks Kiswahili and Swahili is sometimes used in commercial centers. Rwanda’s currency is the Rwandan franc (RFr), which is sometimes also abbreviated to ‘Frw’.

Rwanda is known as the land of the thousand hills and visitors will truly understand why when visiting this beautiful country.

Rwanda is blessed with a magnificent landscape and wildlife within its three national parks. The Volcanoes National Park is situated in the north of the country and is most famous for the gorilla trekking activity, Akagera National Park borders Tanzania and is therefore the best spot to view game. The Nyungwe National Park is situated in the south of Rwanda. Nyungwe National Park is home to a unique birdlife and the first Tree Canopy Walkway in Eastern Africa.

Lake Kivu is a favorite getaway destination for visitors and locals alike and gives guests the opportunity to simply relax or enjoy water sports after experiencing the adventurous national parks.

Tea and coffee are essential for the country as they are the most exported products. Tea and coffee plantations can be found all over the country but especially in the southern part. Before the genocide Rwanda was known as ‘a tropical Switzerland in the heart of Africa’.

The Rwandan Genocide was a genocidal mass slaughter of the Tutsis by the Hutus that took place in 1994. Over the course of approximately 100 days over 500,000 people were killed, according to a Human Rights Watch estimate. One global impact of the Rwandan Genocide is that it served as impetus to the creation of the International Criminal Court. This period in Rwandan history is difficult to comprehend, but the citizens of Rwanda have done remarkably well to overcome their past and forge a new, modern democracy. Genocide memorials can be found all over the country.
Rwanda is also leading the Green Movement in Africa, having banned plastic bags completely and they have a mandatory community service day from 8:00am to 11:00am, on the last Saturday of each month called “Umuganda”. By law all able bodied persons above the age of 18 and below 65 are expected to participate in volunteer community work.

Rwanda perfectly combines adventure, wildlife and history.

**Access Information**

Kigali International Airport (KGL) is located in the suburb of Kanombe, approximately 14 kilometres by road, from the city centre of the country’s capital, Kigali. For that reason Kigali International Airport is sometimes referred to as Kanombe International Airport. There are plans to replace this airport with a new one located south of Kigali.

RwandAir is the home carrier and operates a network of routes within Africa and some international destinations such as Brussels and Dubai. International airlines, including Air France, Qatar Airways, Turkish Airlines and Brussels Airlines serve Rwanda from their home bases.

Flights from Europe usually arrive in Rwanda in the mornings or late in the evenings.

Flights to and from South Africa depart from Johannesburg with RwandAir or South African Airways.

Please note: When leaving Kigali Airport in Rwanda, visitors must pay a departure tax of US$20. Usually this fee is included in the airline ticket.
Located just south of the equator, Rwanda is known for its tropical and temperate weather. Average daily temperatures range from 30 - 34°C (86-93°F), except in the highlands where a temperature between 12 and 15°C (53-59°F) is normal. Between February and May a rainy season hits the country in which the rainfall ranges from about 900 mm in the east and southeast to 1500 mm in the north and northwest volcanic highland areas.

June to September is the dry season and best time to visit for travellers. Furthermore it is the best time for visitors to go Gorilla Trekking. There is a shorter dry season between December and January.

During the dry season the sun is always shining with just the occasional, light rain showers. The high altitude of Rwanda is the main reason for the pleasant, all-year-round temperatures. It can be cold in the evening, therefore visitors should pack warmer items for nighttime and lightweight clothing for the day. Travelers should also be prepared and bring rainproof clothing all year around.

Kigali - the capital city of Rwanda - is situated in the center of the country with few temperature variations throughout the year.

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Clime Information

Rwanda
Well positioned on one of Kigali’s most charming boulevards, this 5 star property is the perfect place to stay when on a trip to Kigali. Offering elegant yet comfortable accommodation, the hotel showcases Rwandan art work and offers several meetings venues.

The hotel has 148 rooms of which 60 are Standard rooms, 37 Superior rooms, 19 Deluxe rooms, 18 Junior Suites, 7 Prime rooms, 6 Executive rooms and 2 generous Presidential Suites.

All rooms have been recently renovated in a pan-African style, with either twin or king sized beds. Most of the rooms are non smoker rooms but smoker rooms are available on request.

The Serena Hotel Kigali is located only 10 km from Kigali International Airport.

Offering excellent local cuisine, the Kigali Serena has a variety of meal choices. The popular Milima Restaurant offers a daily lunch buffet and buffet or a la carte for dinner. The hotel offers not only international and European cuisine but also local Rwandan cuisine. The globally inspired menus are often accompanied by suitable and colourful entertainment.

The Sakoni Café and Bar is the best choice to enjoy snacks and light meals during the day, while overlooking the pool area.

An International Conference Centre is situated within the hotel complex. Kigali is not only the country’s rapidly growing capital city, but also the country’s most important business hub. The extensive conference centre with 500-seater auditorium and well-appointed ballroom is the ideal place to do business in Rwanda. In addition the venue offers WIFI connection and an international press centre.
Located on one of the hills in Kigali, the Hôtel Des Mille Collines by Kempinski is a 4 star property, perhaps most famous for being the location for the filming of the hit movie, Hotel Rwanda. All 112 rooms have recently been renovated in a modern style.

The hotel has one main conference room, which can accommodate up to 150 people. This main room can further be divided into two smaller parts. There are also three small meeting rooms with a capacity for 10-12 persons each. The hotel provides a well-serviced business centre. Guests can enjoy a combination of international and Rwandan cuisine in the recently renovated hotel restaurant. The hotel also offers a Sunday brunch from 12h00 - 16h00. All meals can be served outside on the terrace, weather permitting.

A live band plays twice weekly in the hotel bar, allowing guests to relax after a busy day in the capital city.

Also on offer is a fitness room and tennis court. The hotel is situated near the Golf Club “Source du Nil”.

Hôtel Des Mille Collines by Kempinski | 4* Property | 112 rooms | www.kempinski.com
Gorilla Mountain View Lodge  |  4* Property  |  36 rooms  |  www.3bhotels.com

This very basic 4 star property is located in the Volcanoes National Park area. The lodge is positioned very close to the main headquarters of the park and therefore a good base for Gorilla Trekking. Transfer time is between 10 - 15 minutes.

The lodge provides 36 spacious guest cottages which are spread out over four acres of land, on the slopes of the inactive Mt. Sabinyo Volcano. The location affords guests amazing views whilst staying at the lodge.

This property is simply but comfortably furnished. Electricity and hot water is supplied by a generator.

There is a bar and a restaurant in the central area. Traditional buffet and home-cooked food is served in the open air restaurant.

We would recommend this property for groups who have budget constraints. Access to the lodge is a mere two hour road transfer from Kigali.
Incentive class properties

A rustic mountain lodge, Volcanoes Virunga Lodge is set on the crown of a high hill overlooking the 5 Virunga Volcanoes and has almost 360 degree views of the surrounding area.

The lodge has been described as having “one of the best views in the world”. The lodge’s eight cottages offer elegance and great comfort, with their ‘organic, bush-chic’ design reflecting the local building style. Luxurious, en-suite bathrooms, with full facilities including low-flush toilets and running solar hot water, allow you to enjoy all the comforts of home, while still being sensitive to the environment. Each cottage has its own terrace with spectacular views of the volcanoes or lakes.

Whilst it is one of our favourite properties based on setting, the lodge is situated 45 minutes away from the National Park headquarters, where the trekking departs from.

The stone lodge has a wide wrap-around veranda from which to appreciate the exceptional views across the lakes. Inside the lodge is a cosy lounge with a central fireplace and a small bar area. The dining room features one large table where all guests dine together. Guests can treat themselves to a relaxing massage, particularly welcome after a day trekking with the gorillas.

Aside from gorilla trekking, guests can climb a volcano, track the golden monkey, visit Dian Fossey’s grave or go for gentle strolls around the picturesque villages near the lakes. The lodge is located a three hours’ drive from Kigali.
The Gorillas Nest Lodge belongs to the Shamwari Group.

The Gorillas Nest Lodge is situated in the Northern Rwanda’s Musanze district. The lodge is well-positioned within a forest of Eucalyptus trees on the foothills of the Virunga Volcano range, affording guests breath-taking views. It is a short 10 to 15 minute transfer to the base camp, where Gorilla Trekking starts from.

The original Gorillas Nest Lodge is currently under construction due to fire damage to its main public building but the Hannah Cottage remains open in the meantime. The Hannah Cottage, which was recently renovated to 5 star standards, is now ranked as the finest accommodation on offer in the region.

Guests can enjoy excellent international food choices while overlooking the amazing Volcanoes National Park with its mountain range and unique wildlife.

The lodge is the ideal place to stay when undertaking the Gorilla Trekking experience, or other outdoor activities like the famous, Golden Monkey Trekking or a visit to the Diane Fossey’s Karisoke Camp.

Access to the lodge is a mere two hour road transfer from Kigali.
The lodge, which is operated by The Governors’ Camp Collection, is positioned on the foothills of the Virungas mountain range only a few minutes away from the headquarters of the Volcanoes National Park, ideal for Gorilla Trekking.

While staying in the Sabyinyo Silverback Lodge guests can enjoy the breathtaking views over the magnificent mountain range which stretches through Rwanda, Uganda and the Republic of Congo.

The Sabyinyo Lodge offers a variety of dinner and lunch options which guests can enjoy sitting on a terrace overlooking the hilly landscape. The lodge is known for its fresh and outstanding cuisine. Due to the fact that the Sabyinyo Lodge only offers 8 rooms, guests can enjoy intimate and friendly hospitality.

Besides the great atmosphere, the cottages are set in beautiful surroundings and have a lovely fireplace which is kept lit and roaring by a personal butler.

The bathrooms are spacious and rooms are decorated in a pan-African style.

Unfortunately, the property is not suitable for disabled people and the elderly as there are stairs throughout the lodge and the access is quite steep. The best way of getting to the lodge is via a two hour road transfer from Kigali, passing through scenic agricultural countryside.
Incentive class properties

Nyungwe Forest Lodge | 5* Standard | 24 rooms | www.nyungweforestlodge.com

The lodge, part of the Shamwari Group, has been built to blend in with the surrounding environment. It is situated on a tea plantation, on the edge of the Nyungwe closed canopy rain forest.

The lodge provides 15x King bedded luxury rooms, 7x Twin rooms and 2x King bedded suites. All rooms are air-conditioned, have been carefully designed to be eco-friendly and offer lovely balconies looking out to the forest. Guests are able to connect to the internet during the stay. The lodge has also a small, separate conference venue adjacent to the main dining hall.

The lodge has a lovely pool area around which guests can enjoy their lunch. At night this area is turned into a bonfire space and guests can sit around the fire enjoying the tranquil setting. It’s the ideal place to relax after an adventurous day in the forest.

Activities to enjoy in the area include chimpanzee trekking and bird watching. The Nyungwe National Park is home to a unique wildlife and various walking trails are available so that guests can experience the whole Rwandan rainforest. A visit to the Nyungwe Forest region combines well with a Gorilla Trekking experience in the north. Alternatively guests can enjoy a well-equipped spa during the stay.

The driving distance from Kigali city centre to the lodge is 250 km and the driving time is 4 to 5 hours travelling at speeds of approximately 60km per hour average.

Helicopter charter flights can be arranged from Kigali International Airport, weather permitting.
The Nyungwe Top View Hill Hotel is located in the hills of the Nyungwe forest area. Guests can relax while enjoying breathtaking views overlooking the indigenous rainforest.

The hotel, with its tranquil and beautiful facilities, offers 12 self-contained cottages with 4 twin and 8 queen size bed apartments. There is also a fireplace where guests can warm themselves during chilly nights. There are 6 cottages on each side with a garden in between. The cottages all face the forest and guests can enjoy the views from their private balcony.

The hotel restaurant caters for all dietary needs and the food is freshly prepared and served in an open dining area.

The Top View Hill hotel is ideally situated for all the activities in the Nyungwe National Park, including bird watching, chimpanzee trekking, Colobus Monkey trekking and several trails. The first canopy walkway in Eastern Africa is also close to the hotel.

It's also an idyllic place for guests who just want to relax after their exciting outdoor activities. The lodge is accessible by road from Kigali. Transfer time is between 4 to 5 hours.
Rwanda is known for its three major National Parks. The three National Parks - Volcanoes National Park, Akagera National Park and the Nyungwe National Park - are all very different from each other. For that reason Rwanda is able to offer a variety of unique activities and diverse nature experiences. Visitors can explore the magnificent rainforest, unique wildlife, various trails, the Canopy Walkway or get to trek monkeys and gorillas. The Akagera National Park is a good place to go for a game drive and spot Africa’s most popular animals. This combination gives guests the opportunity to explore the best of Africa in an adventurous and unique way.

**National Parks**

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**Volcanoes National Parks**

This National Park is situated in the northwest of Rwanda. The magnificent mountain range is home to the rare mountain gorilla and various other species. The mountain range is nearly all covered with rich, green rainforest.

Visitors can enjoy the beautiful landscape by trekking gorillas or monkeys (e.g. the rare Golden Monkey) or walk some of the amazing trails. Guests can also enjoy a lesson from the Gorilla Doctors and learn all about the mountain gorillas.

Furthermore a cultural village is situated in the rainforest which welcomes traveller to explore the indigenous and deep Rwandan culture.

**Akagera National Park**

The Akagera National Park - set at a relatively low altitude - is characterized by the savannah landscape with lakes that follow the meandering course of the Akagera River and open grasslands. Akagera National is the place to spot herds of elephant, zebra, giraffe, buffalo and other wild animals. Crocodiles and hippos can be found around the lakes throughout the day. Furthermore visitors are able to spot some of the water birds flying around the lake. In addition helicopter flights are offered to spot animals from above and enjoy beautiful views of the land of the thousand hills.
The rapidly growing capital city is situated in the centre of Rwanda and is the country’s most important business hub, with the international airport connecting Rwanda to the rest of the world. The compact central business district is surrounded by a colourful and busy commercial district with numerous shops and restaurants.

Various memorials remind guests of the dark history of this country. The genocide should become a part of every journey to Rwanda. A historical city tour is also recommended. Tours include the Genocide Museum, the local craft market, the Franco-Rwandan cultural centre and other museums and memorials. The Genocide Memorial consists of three permanent exhibition centres which include the Education Centre, Memorial Gardens and the National Documentation Centre.

In addition visitors can enjoy the Rwandan cuisine and nightlife.

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**Nyungwe National Park**

The Nyungwe National Park is one of the last places in Africa which maintains an intact mid-elevation forest. Not only is Nyungwe National Park the source of Africa’s great rivers, but also Rwanda’s premier water catchment - holding 2/3 of the natural resources. The Congo-Nile Divide is a mountain range that runs north to south through Rwanda.

Moreover this special type of forest is habitat to many species and an important part of the Rwandan ecosystem. Thirteen species of primates, including the Angola colobus can be found in the largest mountain rainforest in Africa. Visitors can enjoy a unique monkey trekking adventure or explore nature by walking some of the trails.

The first Tree Canopy Walk in Eastern Africa was recently opened in this area.

The diversity of the people living in the area is expressed through songs, dance, music, cuisine, handicrafts and other art skills. Travelers can experience this culture by visiting a village, such as the Banda Village, and learn all about how the local people live within the forest environment.

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**Kigali**

The rapidly growing capital city is situated in the centre of Rwanda and is the country’s most important business hub, with the international airport connecting Rwanda to the rest of the world. The compact central business district is surrounded by a colourful and busy commercial district with numerous shops and restaurants.

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Highlights

- **Nyungwe National Park**

- **Kigali**
Banda Village

A good way to experience the Rwandan culture is to visit one of the cultural villages. There are a few around the country. The Banda Village is situated in the Nyungwe National Park. Is it a perfect cultural destination where guests can experience the local culture to its fullest. Guests get in touch with an incredible tradition by singing and dancing with the indigenous people. Visits always include a local food tasting, a village tour, nature hikes, the waterfall visit, basket weaving, cultural crafts and banana beer brewing. Sometimes guests can witness a wedding ceremony and learn about traditional medicine. There is also an opportunity for guests to stay overnight in either a tent or a hut.

Gorilla Trekking

The number one activity and highlight in Rwanda is the Mountain Gorilla trekking. There are only 13 troops left in the Volcanoes National Park in Rwanda, and a limited amount of permits are issued daily for guests to experience this life changing experience. They are without doubt on the brink of extinction. Gorilla families are very territorial and will generally be found in a similar region. With this knowledge, the park rangers have categorised the various gorilla treks into easy, medium and hard treks.

Easy generally means a 20 minute walk up to the edge of the park through farm land areas and a further 15-30 minute walk inside the actual forest.

Medium generally means a 20 minute walk up to the edge of the park through the farm and then a 45-75 minute walk uphill, inside the actual forest.

Hard - means a 20 minute walk up to the edge of the park through the farms and then a serious climb up to the top reach of the mountains. These are generally not offered, except in the peak season, and guests would need to be really fit to reach these Gorillas.

Once you reach your family of Gorillas a few rules are in place; to minimise the possibility of transmitting human diseases, visitors are asked to maintain a distance of 7m from the gorillas. Guests need to be fit and healthy when visiting the gorillas.

Viewing time is limited to one hour and a maximum of 8 visitors are allowed per group. Photography is allowed, although no flash photography of the gorillas is permitted.
**Rwanda**

**Unique activities**

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**Lake Kivu**

Lake Kivu is the largest freshwater lake in Rwanda. Not only is this the favourite get-away destination for all Rwandan residents but also a good place for visitors to enjoy a variety of water-based activities. It is possible to swim in the lake, although at own risk. It’s the place where you can enjoy kayaking, canoeing, windsurfing and play volleyball. It’s also highly recommended to enjoy a one hour 30 minute speed boat trip from Gisenyi to Kibuye.

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**Helicopter Flight - Akagera National Park**

A unique and adventurous way to explore the Akagera National Park is by a helicopter flight.

Visitors can enjoy the stunning views and get to understand why Rwanda is called the land of the thousand hills. At the same time watch wild animals from a bird’s eye view. The helicopter flight is ideal for guests who have limited travel time available.

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**Tea and Coffee Plantation**

Not only is Rwanda famous for its coffee and tea but these products are essential for the economy as they are the most exported products of Rwanda. A visit to one of the tea or coffee plantation is a must for each traveler.

Visitors can experience the whole process of coffee or tea making. Afterwards guests can purchase the blend they have created.

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**Canopy Walkway & Trails**

This walkway was recently launched and is the first canopy walkway in Eastern Africa and the third of its kind in Africa.

The hanging platform allows visitor to view wildlife from above - overlooking the amazing Nyungwe National Park.

Visitors can also explore unique species by walking some of the various trails in Nyungwe National Park or Volcanoes National Park. This is one of the best ways to experience the natural habitat.
The cuisine of Rwanda is based on locally produced, and often, organic food. Local dishes are made with home grown products such as bananas, plantains, pulses, sweet potatoes, beans and cassava. Most of the Rwandan only eat meat a few times during the month and their diet is often based on potatoes which can be seen as a by product of the colonial time. Restaurants and hotels serve both international and continental cuisine.

Specialties:
- Ugali (or bugali): this is a paste made of maize or cassava and water to form a porridge
- Posho
- Cassava leaves
- Goat meat

Rwanda is known for its teas and coffees as well as its banana beer. Up until now the banana beer has been produced in the cultural villages and served all over the country. Another regional drink is the locally brewed beer called “Mutzig”.

Rwanda is not as sophisticated as other destinations in Africa but it does offer some choice for special venues, in magnificent locations, with breath-taking views. Two of these include:

**Heaven Restaurant & Bar, Kigali**
The Heaven Restaurant offers international cuisine made with only locally produced and organic ingredients. Guests can enjoy great ambience, excellent food and quality service whilst overlooking the city of Kigali. The Heaven Restaurant has an outside terrace and an open space inside the restaurant.

**Cormoran Lodge, Lake Kivu**
Guests can enjoy the breathtaking views while eating on the panoramic terrace. This unique venue is situated on Lake Kivu. Guests can enjoy international cuisine and an excellent service overlooking the lake. The wooden restaurant is an ideal place to have dinner or lunch in a relaxing atmosphere.