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## Rwanda Fact Sheet

### GEOGRAPHY

Rwanda is a landlocked republic in Equatorial Africa, situated on the eastern rim of the Albertine Rift, a western arm of the Great Rift Valley, on the watershed between Africa's two largest river systems: the Nile and the Congo. Much of the country's 26,338 km<sup>2</sup> is impressively mountainous, the highest peak being Karisimbi (4,507m) in the volcanic Virunga chain protected by the Volcanoes National Park. The largest body of water is Lake Kivu, but there are other numerous lakes around the country, notably Burera, Ruhondo, Muhazi and Mugesera, some of which have erratic shapes following the contours of the steep mountains that enclose them.

### ECONOMY

Primarily a subsistence agriculture economy, Rwanda nonetheless produces for export some of the finest tea and coffee in the world. Other industries include sugar, fishing and flower for export

Area: 24950sq. km

Capital city: Kigali

Currency: Rwanda franc (Frw)

### INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS

All international flights arrive at Kigali International Airport, just 10 Km from central Kigali. International flights arriving in Kigali are with SN Brussels, Kenya Airways, Ethiopian Airlines, Air Burundi and Rwandair Express.

There are two direct flights from Brussels by SN Brussels Airlines. Rwandair Express has introduced two flights a day from Nairobi (Kenya) and Entebbe (Uganda), and two per week from Johannesburg. Rwandair also has daily flights to Bujumbura and 3 flights weekly to Kilimanjaro. With effect from January 9th 2009, Rwandair Express will fly thrice a week to Rubavu (Gisenyi-Rwanda) every Tuesday, Friday and Sunday.

### PASSPORT AND VISAS

A valid passport with visa is mandatory. In view of the bilateral agreements, nationals of the following countries may visit Rwanda without visa for a period up to 90 days: USA, UK, Germany, Canada, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sweden, Mauritius, South Africa and Hong Kong. Visas can be applied online or bought upon arrival

### MONEY

The unit of currency is the Rwanda franc. The US dollar is the hard currency of preference. It may be impossible to exchange travellers' cheques away from the capital. Credit cards are usually only accepted at the major hotels in Kigali.



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## LANGUAGE

In addition to the indigenous language of Kinyarwanda, French and English are official languages. French is widely spoken throughout the country. In the capital and other tourist centres, many people speak English.

## PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Good Friday and Easter Monday, which fall on variable dates, are recognized in Rwanda. Other public holidays are:

- 1 January (New Year's Day);
- 1 February (National Heroes Day);
- 7 April (Genocide Memorial Day);
- 1 May (Labour Day);
- 1 July (Independence Day);
- 4 July (National Liberation Day);
- 15 August (Assumption Day);
- 1 October (Patriotism Day);
- 25 December (Christmas Day), and
- 26 December (Boxing Day).

## COMMUNICATIONS

Rwanda has an excellent cell phone network covering almost the entire country. International phone calls can be made easily. Appropriate SIM cards for the network are readily available everywhere, even in remote towns, and cell phones can be purchased or rented from major shops in Kigali. Most towns of any size will have several Internet cafes and computer centres.

## GETTING AROUND

Rwanda has possibly the best roads in East Africa. Most visitors who have booked through a tour company will be provided with good private vehicles, usually 4-wheel drive. All of the major centres are connected with local and luxury bus services. Air charter services are available anywhere in the country.

## SAFETY AND HEALTH

A certificate of yellow-fever vaccination is required. Much of Rwanda lies at too high an elevation for malaria to be a major concern, but the disease is present and prophylactic drugs are strongly recommended. It is advisable not to drink tap water. Bottled mineral water can be bought in all towns. Hospitals are located in all major towns.

## SEASONS AND CLIMATE

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, and the hot low-lying Tanzania border area protected in Akagera National Park. 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.



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#### WHEN TO VISIT

Rwanda can be visited throughout the year. Gorilla trekking and other forest walks are less demanding during the drier months. The European winter is the best time for birds, as Palaeartic migrants supplement resident species.

#### GORILLA PERMITS

Gorilla Permits can be arranged by a travel operator, or can be purchased directly through the Office Rwandaise du Tourisme et des Parcs Nationaux (ORTPN) / The Rwanda Office of Tourism and National Parks, at the headquarters in Kigali, or at their office in Musanze.