



DISCOVER RWANDA'S FLORA & FAUNA



ACROBATIC chimpanzees, dramatically bearded monkeys, harlequin-feathered birds, sleek antelope... irresistible as they are, there's far more to Rwanda's wildlife than

gorillas. Visitors who drop in simply to visit the gentle giants are missing out on a wealth of habitats, birds and animals. Those who stay longer testify that it's definitely worth exploring the richly diverse ecosystems of one of Africa's most beautiful countries.

The grandeur typical of the continent is exhibited repeatedly throughout the "land of a thousand hills". Rwanda owes its mountainous profile and temperate year-round climate to its location on the eastern rim of the Albertine Rift Valley. Tropical, fertile and bursting with potential, the country's verdant good looks reflect its post-genocide reconstruction.

Although undulating fields and terraced hillsides of plantain, tea and coffee are typical, Rwanda's ecosystems contrast drastically. Nurturing exceptional levels of biodiversity, Nyungwe Forest National Park is one of Africa's oldest rainforests, while

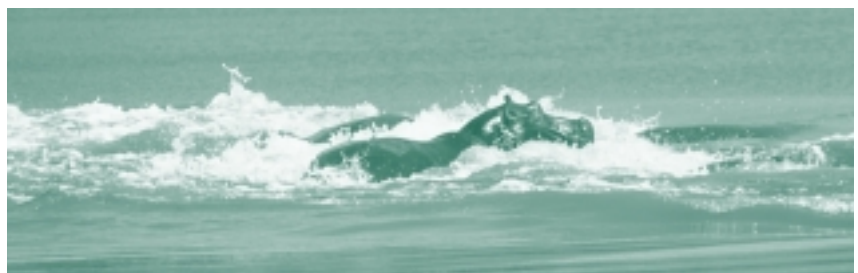
Akagera NP, warm and low-lying, is Rwanda's answer to classic East African savannah. Visitors can drive for hours on end through rolling grass plains studded with acacia and antelope without seeing another vehicle.

Such diverse species and habitats produce a plethora of conservation challenges, which Rwanda is now tackling head-on. Tourism's role is vital, both in generating revenue and employment, and highlighting locally the plight and value of the country's precious natural heritage. As its tourist infrastructure continues to improve and conservation programmes become firmly rooted, Rwanda's menu of A-list wildlife sightings can only grow longer and more enticing.



DID YOU KNOW?

- Rwanda is one of Africa's top birding countries, with an incredible 670 species recorded in an area comparable to Wales.
- Nyungwe Forest NP boasts around a quarter of all the primate species in Africa.
- Its Rwenzori colobus troops are the continent's biggest tree-dwelling primate groups (up to 400 individuals).
- Nyungwe is the largest single tract of montane forest in East or Central Africa and contains over 200 tree species.
- Rwanda's varied altitude contributes to its broad biodiversity, with many species occupying specific altitudinal levels.



Q&A

Have the political upheavals of recent decades affected conservation in Rwanda?

Inevitably political instability has caused the neglect of some conservation areas since the early 1990s. However, Rwanda's parks remain rich ecosystems, both in terms of wildlife populations and diversity. Although not yet at their optimum, their potential is unharmed. The greatest challenge for conservationists is land use: the country's population is set to double in twenty years. Tourism plays a vital role in resisting this pressure and ensuring the future of Rwanda's protected areas.

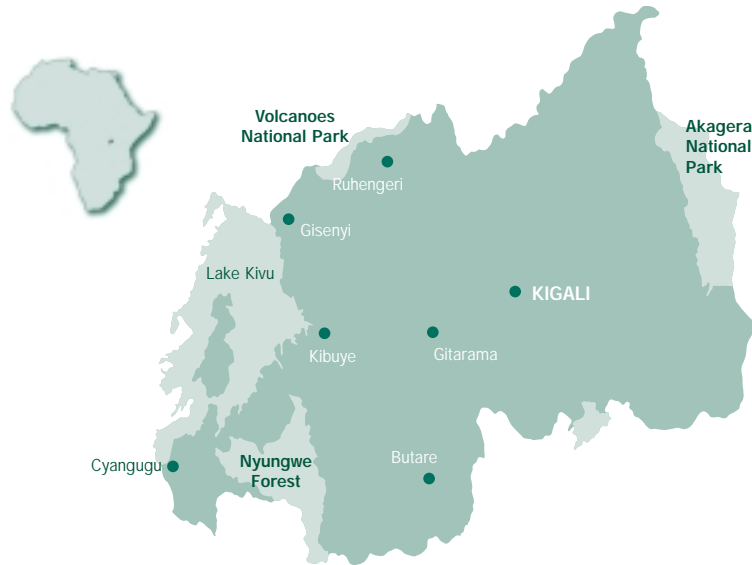
Gorillas aside, what are the highlights of Rwandan wildlife?

Volcanoes National Park is also home to the wonderful Golden monkey, while Nyungwe Forest offers a broader primate experience. It boasts rewarding chimp tracking, while its nine monkey species include the agile Rwenzori colobus – truly spectacular when swinging through the trees *en masse*. Like the beautiful red and grey L'Hoest's monkey, it's endemic to the Albertine Rift. Akagera's plains game includes herds of elephant and buffalo, Masai giraffe, Burchell's zebra and eleven types of antelope, from eland (the world's largest) to the rare sitatunga. Large pods of hippo are guaranteed, while lucky visitors might see leopard, hyena or a stray lion. Don't miss the small treasures: Nyungwe has over 100 species of both butterfly and orchid. Rwanda also numbers among Africa's great birding destinations.



What's so special about the birdlife?

The country contains an outstanding variety in a relatively small area. The jewel-rich colours of Great blue turacos, Lilac-breasted rollers and Paradise monarchs impress even the most reluctant twitcher, while numerous unusual sightings keep dedicated birders rapt. Avian life is prolific everywhere,



although Nyungwe is the most important ornithological site, with 275 species, including 24 regional endemics. Eagles soar above Akagera's savannah, while its papyrus channels harbour some of Africa's densest concentrations of waterbirds: pelicans, cranes, kingfishers and, occasionally, the eagerly sought Shoebill.

What type of accommodation can I expect?

In the main, Rwanda's tourism infrastructure has been neglected and needs investment in order to raise standards and train staff.

Fortunately, this is exactly what is happening.

The South African-based hospitality company Southern Sun has secured a 15 year lease on two properties in prime locations in Kigali and on Lake Kivu's shores. These facilities will be refurbished for reopening in December 2003.

Another South African company is renovating the old Akagera Hotel, which will reopen as a 58-room game lodge with conference facilities in the Akagera National Park in December 2003.

The tourist board and National Parks authority, ORTPN (Office Rwandaise du Tourisme et des Parcs Nationaux), runs a simple, comfortable resthouse at Nyungwe, with single, twin or double rooms and communal washing facilities. Meals can be prepared at short notice. There's also a campsite near the park.

Do I need to join a tour or can I visit independently?

You can visit Akagera on your own, although you'll need a vehicle as the wildlife is dangerous. Nyungwe has excellent marked

walking trails and guides, and can safely be visited independently. Entry permits are obtainable at ORTPN on l'Avenue de l'Armée in Kigali or can be purchased at the entrances to Nyungwe and Akagera. Tours to both parks can be booked through operators in Kigali.

Gorilla permits are strictly controlled and can only be secured by purchasing them through ORTPN offices in Kigali or Ruhengeri, or through an authorised operator. You need to join an organised, guided trek in order to see the gorillas.

What time of year is best for wildlife viewing?

Rwanda is a year-round destination, but the long dry season (June to September) makes hiking in Nyungwe easier underfoot and Akagera's untarred roads more negotiable. The European winter is best for birds, when Palaearctic migrants supplement resident species.

TEN BEST NON-GORILLA WILDLIFE SIGHTINGS

Mammal

Rwenzori colobus

L'Hoest's monkey

Chimpanzee

Sitatunga

Leopard

Bird

Great blue turaco

Rwenzori turaco

Regal sunbird

Shoebill

Crowned Crane

www.discover-rwanda.org

tel: +44 (0)1344 298 985 fax: +44 (0)870 706 0116 email: info@discover-rwanda.org

for further information or to contact your nearest rwandan travel specialist

