

## RWANDA AT A GLANCE

**POPULATION:** 11,901,484 (July 2017 est.)

**LANGUAGES:** Kinyarwanda, French, English

**PREDOMINANT RELIGIONS:** Christianity, Islam

**TIME ZONE:** Six hours ahead of Eastern Daylight Time (New York City)

**TELEPHONE CODE:** 250, country code

Notorious for the gruesome 1994 genocide, Rwanda, the “Land of a Thousand Hills,” is now a reasonably safe and increasingly popular travel destination. The country’s main attraction, the mountain gorillas, have miraculously survived — even thrived — despite a devastating civil war that brought poachers, settlers and rebel soldiers into their rugged park refuge.

The ethnically motivated war, which attracted worldwide media attention and eventually was documented by the movie *Hotel Rwanda*, resulted in the massacre of at least 1 million people between April and July 1994. Since then, however, the news out of Rwanda has mostly involved positive change and gradual reconciliation. Local and international tribunals have dealt with the perpetrators of the genocide, and the country held its first elections in 1999, paving the way for the unveiling of a democratic constitution and peaceful presidential election in 2003.

The Volcanoes National Park, home to the rare mountain gorillas, reopened in July 1999, and travelers can once again visit these gentle giants made famous by Dian Fossey.

### COMPASSION IN RWANDA

Compassion’s ministry in Rwanda began in 1979. Today, more than 69,600 children are served by more than 270 Compassion-



assisted child development centers throughout the country. Compassion’s church-based child development centers are places of hope for impoverished children in Rwanda. Under the guidance of caring Christian adults, children’s pressing needs for nutrition and medical attention are met. Children also receive tutoring to help with their academics. Health and hygiene lessons teach them to care for their own physical well-being, and positive social skills are modeled and encouraged.

### WEATHER

Rwanda is only 2 degrees south of the equator, but its high altitude means temperatures are seldom extreme (generally in the 70s F / 22-27 C during the day and the 60s F / 16-21 C at night — expect frost in the high mountains). July through September and January are the dry seasons. During the rainy seasons, heavy downpours occur almost daily, but after the showers are over, the rest of the day may be sunny.

### CURRENCY

Rwanda’s official currency is the Rwandan *franc* (RWF). Hard currency can be exchanged at several banks and *forex bureaux* (foreign exchange bureaus) in Kigali and other large

towns. Credit cards are not widely accepted and should not be relied upon except in an emergency.

## FOOD

Most hot, freshly cooked food should be safe, but peel fresh fruit and raw vegetables before eating, choose meat that is cooked thoroughly, avoid local dairy products, and assume the water is unsafe (stick with prepackaged or boiled drinks).

## SHOPPING

Shop for wood carvings, masks, pottery, drums, embroidery, pearl-decorated work, earthenware statues and *inangas* (six-string harps). Don't buy any product made from ivory, which is illegal to sell. Any ivory items will be confiscated by customs.

## ELECTRICAL CURRENT

The voltage used in Rwanda is 220V, and electrical outlets accommodate plug types C or J. (For up-to-date plug and outlet information, check [whatplug.info](http://whatplug.info) and click on your destination country.) You may wish to take a universal plug adaptor, available in the luggage/travel section at most big-box stores.



## DO'S AND DON'TS

- **Do** be aware that you'll need cash for almost everything in Rwanda, including air tickets. Credit cards are accepted at only a few hotels in Kigali, and then it's only MasterCard.
- **Don't** expect to find anything in Rwanda the same as it was before the civil war. For example, the grounds of the once luxurious Rebero Horizon Hotel have been converted into the National Memorial Cemetery for genocide victims. Even the shops in Kigali that might look unchanged probably have new owners — with former owners having fled or been killed.
- **Don't** refer to individual Rwandans as Hutu or Tutsi, and avoid probing too deeply into the past of the Rwandans you meet — most of whom may have lost family members during the genocide.

## DRESS

Bring plenty of light clothing for the day but also some warmer apparel, such as sweaters or sweatshirts, for the (sometimes quite chilly) evenings. Between dusk and dawn, wear long sleeves, long trousers and socks to minimize mosquito bites. For hikes in the mountains, sturdy shoes and rainproof gear are strongly recommended, as well as a hat and sunscreen.

**Women:** Modest, loose-fitting tops (nothing form-fitting) are recommended; sleeveless tops are acceptable, but please cover your shoulders in places of worship; pants, capris, longer skirts and loose-fitting, casual dresses are recommended for women.

**Men:** Button shirts and polo shirts are recommended. T-shirts are allowed in casual settings. Long, non-denim pants are recommended for center visits and church services.

**Both:** Shorts are highly discouraged outside of beachside locations. A light jacket is recommended for cool evenings or rainy days.

**Shoes:** Closed-toe shoes are recommended during the day due to potential unsanitary or uneven terrain.

## GENERAL SECURITY PRECAUTIONS

Leave at home all unnecessary credit cards, Social Security card, library cards and similar items you may routinely carry in your wallet. Carry items in front pockets, not back pockets. Do not display large sums of money in public; make visible only the amount of money that approximates your purchase. Never leave items with cash in them (purse, wallet, backpack, etc.) on a bus, car or any other location. Stay alert and be cautious at all times. Don't take safety and security for granted.

## U.S. EMBASSY INFORMATION

**Website:** [rw.usembassy.gov](http://rw.usembassy.gov)

**Phone:** (250) 252 596 400

**Address:** 2657 Avenue de la Gendarmerie (Kacyiru), P.O. Box 28, Kigali, Rwanda

**We strongly advise you to contact the CDC ([www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)) or check with your personal physician for more information about your specific health needs while traveling, including any recommendations for immunizations.**

*All information taken from the World Factbook and  
Compassion International.*

## USEFUL WORDS AND PHRASES

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The official language of Rwanda is Kinyarwanda. The country's secondary language is French. Some common Rwandan greetings include:

Hello	<b>Bonjour</b>
Nice to meet you	<b>Enchanté</b>
How are you?	<b>Ç ava?</b>
What is your name?	<b>Tu t'appelles comment?</b>
My name is.....	<b>Je m'appelle (name)</b>
How old are you?	<b>Quel âge avez-vous?</b>
Yes	<b>Oui</b>
No	<b>No</b>
Please	<b>S'il vous plaît</b>
Thank you	<b>Merci</b>
You're welcome	<b>Je vous en prie</b>
I do not speak French	<b>Je ne parle pas français</b>
Do you speak English?	<b>Parlez-vous anglais?</b>
I don't understand	<b>Je ne comprends pas</b>
You can do it!	<b>Vous pouvez le faire!</b>
I love you	<b>Je t'aime</b>
I am praying for you	<b>Je prie pour vous</b>

Jesus loves you

You are precious to God

God bless you

I believe in you

Tell me about your family

Good/OK

I need

How much?

Too expensive

Cheaper

Where is the bathroom?

Where is the church?

Where is the bank?

Where is the hotel?

**Jésus vous aime**

**Vous êtes précieux pour Dieu**

**Que Dieu vous bénisse**

**Je crois en toi**

**Parlez-moi de votre famille**

**Bon**

**J'ai besoin d'...**

**Combien?**

**Trop cher**

**Moins cher**

**Où sont les toilettes?**

**Où est l'église?**

**Où est la banque?**

**Où se trouve l'hôtel?**