

Akagera and Muhazi Destination

TOURIST MAP

RWANDA



Akagera and Lake Muhazi Tourist Map

The Eastern Province is a fairly flat and low elevation area bordered in the north by Uganda, in the east by Tanzania and in the south by Burundi. It is here that the Albertine Rift descends into Tanzania. The climate is more humid and warmer than the rest of Rwanda. As a result, it features fertile agricultural lands and excellent grazing. The Eastern Province's main attraction is Akagera National Park but Lake Muhazi, en route from Kigali and the Rusumo Falls on the Tanzanian border, deserves a visit and is worth a detour.

Rusumo Falls

A waterfall situated on the Akagera River on the border between Rwanda and Tanzania. These falls have played an important part in the history of Rwanda because they form the only bridging point on the river in that area. The falls saw the first arrival of Europeans in Rwanda.



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Lake Muhazi

Lake Muhazi is a long and shallow lake situated 30 km from Kigali. Farming and fishing are the main activities of the population living around the lake.

Lake Muhazi is particularly known for its large population of Spotted-necked Otters but there are a number of bird species around the lake, including African Fish Eagles, Malachite Kingfishers, Pied Kingfishers, Swamp Flycatchers and many more.

The future of Lake Muhazi looks promising. This 60 km long and 5 km wide lake with 26,580 hectares of land available for development holds great potential for the future. Some of the conservation, community and tourism projects for this lake area include;

- community markets and local community shops
- a tourism centre
- reforestation and conservation, with a 200m buffer allocated for conservation
- an integrated resort centre and country club

Proposed Project: The Lake Muhazi Golf & Country Resort will be Central Africa's first 18-hole golf course on a 80 ha stand. Planned to be 10 km south of Rwamagana and less than an hours drive from Kigali. The aim to build a world-class resort located with a view of the neighbouring hills, the lake and woodlands.



African Kingfisher © RDB/Rwanda Tourism



Brown Chested Lapwing © Marcell Claassen

Rwamagana District

Rwamagana, the capital of the Eastern Province of Rwanda, lies approximately 50 km from Kigali, on the road towards Tanzania.

A number of Inyambo cows are seen in the area.



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Resort Seeds of Peace Centre is run by the Episcopal Church and offers accommodation, food and tours. In the grounds, you will find a traditional Mwami hut: a model of a King's house from the former Rwandan monarchy.

Jambo Beach Resort is not a beach as its name would suggest, but a popular restaurant and bar. Look out for the tree full of Weaver birds. It's easily located along the road towards Rwamagana.

Kayonza District

Gahini, a village on the hill near the eastern edge of Lake Muhazi. The lake shore at Gahini is a popular tourist stop en route to Akagera National Park. It is 73 km from Kigali, by road.



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Humure Refugee Village Tour, a 40-minute drive from the Akagera National Park's main gate. Repatriated Rwandans from Tanzania were relocated and 220 houses were built here. The tour includes visits to local cooperatives (milk, honey, batik) and you will be able to appreciate local dancing and cooking.

Nyagatare District

The largest district in Rwanda and lies in a low hill and grassy plain area, and low hills. Offering excellent views in all directions, including the mountains of southern Uganda and, on a very clear day, the Virunga volcanoes range in the North West of Rwanda.



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Imigongo Art

In the 19th century, Prince Kakira, the son of the King of Gisaka, living in the Province of Kibungo, part of the Eastern Province, invented the art of decorating houses. A popular art form using cow dung and is usually produced by women. The dung is dried and mixed with colours made from organic material, like plants, to create mostly black, white and red paints. This paint mixture is then applied on walls, pottery or canvas in spiral forms or geometric designs.

The paintings from the Kakira cooperative (named after Prince Kakira) are well and widely known today. This cooperative was inspired by the prince's art, adapting his mural paintings and motifs to create the decorative 'IMIGONGO' paintings, applied now to other type of supports such as wooden plates.



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Akagera and Lake Muhazi



Rwanda is a landlocked country in Central Africa. Also known as 'the land of a thousand hills', Rwanda has 5 volcanoes, 23 lakes and numerous rivers, some forming the source of the River Nile. The country lies 75 miles south of the equator in the Tropic of Capricorn, 880 miles 'as the crow flies' west of the Indian Ocean and 1,250 miles east of the Atlantic Ocean - literally in the heart of Africa. Rwanda with a land area of 26,338 square Kilometers, is bordered by Uganda to the north, Tanzania to the east, Burundi to the south and the democratic republic of Congo to the west.



The areas main attraction are the Akagera National Park and Lake Muhazi, a long and shallow lake situated 30 kms from Kigali which is soon to become a lake resort area. Akagera National Park with its many lakes, is big game country. There are several species to encounter; buffalo, elephant, zebra, giraffe, and a variety of antelope. It is also recognised by Birdlife International as an important birding area.



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Akagera National Park

Akagera National Park is on the north-eastern edge of Rwanda. It is the largest National Park in Rwanda covering an area of 1,085 km². It borders Tanzania and incorporates the Kagera River, hence the name Akagera. The National Park was founded in 1934 to protect animals and vegetation in three habitats: savannah, mountain and swamp.

The Akagera River, the most remote source of the Nile, flows along the eastern part of the Park and feeds many lakes, the largest being Lake Ihema. The labyrinth of lakes and papyrus swamps follows the river's course to make up over a third of the park. This is the largest protected wetland in central Africa.

In 2010, the Rwanda Development Board and the African Parks Network agreed to collaborate in the management of Akagera. Their aim is to make Akagera a world-class National Park. Some planned expansion over the next five years includes the fencing of the entire reserve and to ensure that the Big Five (lion, elephant, buffalo, leopard and rhinoceros) roam around the Park in larger numbers.

In contrast to the cultivated hills and mountains of Rwanda, Akagera is at a relatively lower altitude, the climate is moderately warmer and the area mostly low-lying savannah, with rolling plains of broad-leaved and acacia woodlands and grasslands. This open expansiveness is ideal for game viewing.



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Wild Animals

Akagera with its many lakes, is big game country. A few of the species that you will encounter are: buffalo, elephant, zebra, giraffe and a variety of antelope.

Important to note is that Akagera and its lakes are home to one of the highest concentrations of hippopotomus in Africa. One of the animals that you will probably also see is the Nile crocodile which is the world's largest reptile.

Of the shy animals that you may be able to spot, Akagera has a small but nonetheless important population of leopards and spotted hyenas. Lions are being re-introduced into the park.

The smaller predators to be found within the Park are mongooses, genets, serval cats and side-striped jackals. Also very common in the Park, are the primates: olive baboons, vervet monkeys, bush babies and more rarely, silver monkeys. Of the 12 antelope species that may be observed in Akagera, the graceful impala is the most common and will probably be impossible to miss!

Akagera National Park is one of the most diverse and scenic of Africa's game reserves in term of landscape and one where you can still drive for some hours without encountering another vehicle.



Zebra © RDB/Rwanda Tourism



Giraffe © Charles Campbell

Birds and Birding

With more than 525 bird species, Akagera is one of the best spots for bird-watching in Rwanda. The three habitats of the park: savannah, mountain and swamp, encourage a wide variety of birds. Akagera is indisputably the best place in Rwanda to find savannah birds and raptors. It is also very well stocked with water-birds and the less common birds living amongst the papyrus swamps.

Akagera and Nyungwe National Parks are complementary in terms of bird life and there isn't any species breeding in Rwanda that can't be spotted between these sites. The bird lover will certainly be impressed by the variety and the rarity of what can be observed. Visiting birders are likely to be rewarded with sightings of: the elusive shoebill stork, papyrus gonolek, Carruthers's cisticola, white-winged warbler, and the papyrus canary. Other species to be found around the low-lying savannah are the sought after: red-faced barbet, Sousa's shrike, long-tailed cisticola, Bennett's woodpecker white-winged and broad-tailed warblers and Miombo wren warblers, and white-collared oliveback.



Papyrus Gonolek © Marcell Claassen



Marabout Stork © Marcell Claassen



Bateleur © Marcell Claassen



Greater Blue-eared Sterling © Marcell Claassen

Boat Trips

Boating on Lake Ihema is a must if you come to Akagera. Boat trips are operated by Akagera Safari Lodge and the Rwandan Tourism Office. While enjoying the view of Lake Ihema, you are likely to catch sight of numerous hippos and the thrilling outsized Nile crocodiles. For the bird lovers, there's an opportunity to observe many water-birds.

Fishing

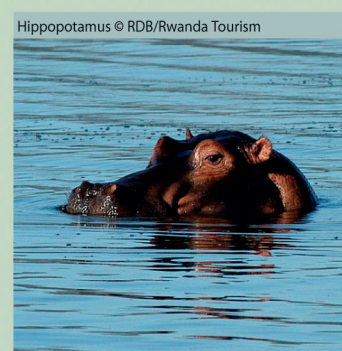
On Lake Shakani at the several camping spots in the bush.

Game Drives

If you are staying at the Akagera Game Lodge, you can join the game drives they offer, including night drives where you have the opportunity to spot animals not out and about in the day.



Topi © RDB/Rwanda Tourism



Hippopotamus © RDB/Rwanda Tourism



© Charles Campbell

Self Drives

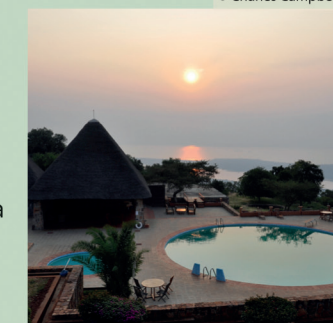
On entering the park, at the gate, you will receive a map to orientate yourself. You will be offered the option of taking an on-board guide, should you wish to. Guides are experts in spotting animals in the wild, identifying them and they can help you find your way around the park. The cost to hire a guide is included in your entrance fee although a tip at the end of a trip is expected.

There are many circuits to drive of various lengths. These offer different game drive experiences as you drive through the varied habitats of the park. A popular one-day drive, leaving from the southern part of the park is to pass all the lakes going north, and turn back when you reach Mutumba Hills.

Accommodation

The upmarket Akagera Game Lodge, is situated within the southwest of the park and is close to Lake Ihema and to the main gate.

A rougher but cheaper and also magical way to discover Akagera National Park is to camp. There are several campsites and facilities for camping available around the park.



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