

Volcanoes Destination

TOURIST MAP

RWANDA



© RDB/Rwanda Tourism

Volcanoes Destination Tourist Map

The magnificent Virunga Mountains, situated in the Northern Province of Rwanda, on the border of Rwanda, DRC and Uganda. These mountains consist of six Volcanoes, 125 km² of mountain forest, and are home to the famous gorilla families.

The **Volcanoes National Park** was first gazetted in 1925, as a small area bounded by Karisimbi, Bisoke and Mikeno Volcanoes, intended to protect the gorillas from poaching. It was the very first National Park to be created in Africa.

There are many activities to be enjoyed in this area apart from Gorillas Trekking in the **Volcanoes National Park**. This area is home to numerous caves, a number of Cultural and Community Tourism initiatives as well as being an excellent location for bird watching.

For the sport enthusiast there are a number of hiking trails in the majestic Virunga Mountains or you can enjoy cycling the area, boating on the Twin lakes or even try your hand at fishing .

Development is proposed of further extreme sports in the area, such as mountain climbing.



Thick-billed Seedeater © Marcell Claassen

Community and Cultural based Tourism Activities

Ethno Botany Tour with Traditional Healers. This field tour will introduce to you herbs and plants that help to cure different ailments. It is followed by a visit to the local pharmacy and an opportunity to meet individuals who are under treatment and follow up their recovery stages.

Kinigi - Iby'Iwacu Cultural Village offers a number of activities and the opportunity to experience Rwandan traditional living and what makes it authentic. Grind millet and sorghum on the local grinding stone to make food, cycle a wooden bicycle around the village, shoot arrows with the Batwa people, listen to village elders explain their traditions and practices and so much more. There is even the opportunity to enjoy the traditional Intore dancers.

Banana and sorghum are staple food products in Rwanda. Learn about the four different species of banana plants and their use by joining the **Banana & Sorghum Beer Production Experience**.

Markets in Musanze are worthwhile exploring. Enquire about the Village walks where local Rwandese women demonstrate cooking Traditional Rwandese food. This includes food preparation and how to package food in banana leaves, the use of various local spices until the meal is served.

Brick Making Tour, visits the clay fields where you can watch and learn the art of local brick making with clay. Clay bricks are wrapped in banana leaves to dry over a two day period before being pressed in a wooden frame. This tour is often coupled with the opportunity to get your hands dirty and help build a community house.



© ooyoo/istock



Intore Drummers © RDB/Rwanda Tourism



Banana sellers © RDB/Rwanda Tourism



Traditional food preparation © Charles Campbell



© Charles Campbell



© Marcell Claassen



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Lakes, good for Birding! Twin Lakes: Burera and Ruhondo

Lakes Burera and Ruhondo, close to the gorilla-tracking centre of Musanze, are often neglected gems.

People living around Rwanda's many lakes try to make a living out of what these lakes have to offer. Amahoro Tours co-operates with a group of local people who use traditional fishing methods at the twin lakes Burera and Ruhondo. The work is carried out either from the lake shore or from self-made traditional canoes that consist of a single piece of wood.

Visit an island, where you will get a boat or dugout canoe ride to the respective island in lakes Ruhondo and Burera. Enjoy the nice scenery and excellent birding opportunities. Bring a packed lunch and have a picnic on the island. Discover nature in traditional canoes, enjoy the breathtaking landscape, wetland habitat and water birds.



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Lake Karago

A beautiful lake located between Rubavu and Musanze districts.



© RDB/Rwanda Tourism

Lake Nyarakigugu

A magnificent lake with good fishing and birding opportunities.

The Rugezi Swamp

Is a drowned valley composed of old metamorphic rocks and forms a part of the Buberuka Highlands.

This rounded hill Swamp has been recognised as one of Rwanda's IBA's (Important Birding Area). The other IBA in the area is the Volcanoes National Park.

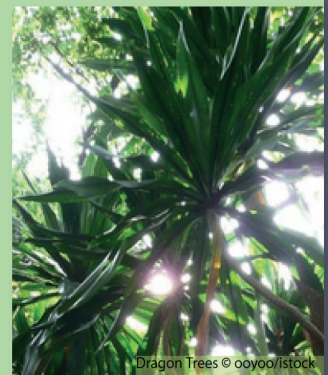
The swamp is home to a number of sought after birds, one of these being *Grauer's Swamp-warbler* who has taken nest here.



Grauer's swamp-warbler © USAID/Nyiragwe Ntara

Buhanga Eco-Park

Is a small patch of forest 8km outside Musanze offering nature walks, picnics and camping facilities. The forest is dominated by magnificent dragon trees and is home to a number of exquisite birds.

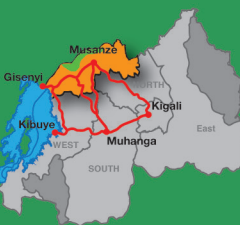


Dragon Trees © ooyoo/istock

Volcanoes



Rwanda is a landlocked country situated in central Africa. Also known as "the land of a thousand hills," Rwanda has five volcanoes, twenty-three 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 km², is bordered by Uganda to the North, Tanzania to the East, Burundi to the South, and the Democratic Republic of Congo to the West.



One of the largest cities in Rwanda, Musanze is a bustling city hosting almost all tourists visiting the world famous mountain gorillas. Musanze has long been the base point for gorilla visits and is cradled against a stunning backdrop of Karisimbi, Bisoke, Sabyinyo, Gahinga and Muhabura volcanoes. The city is rich in cultural tourism opportunities, caving, birding and fishing on the nearby lakes. The city is also only a 45-minute drive away from Gisenyi and the stunning Lake Kivu.



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Virunga Mountains © Marcell Claassen



Crater Lake © RDB/Rwanda Tourism

The Volcanoes in the Volcanoes National Park

Most of the volcanoes forming the magnificent Virunga Mountain range chain are dormant, except for Mount Nyiragongo at 3462m and Mount Nyamuragira at 3063m above sea level, in the DRC. The most recent eruptions date of 2006 and January 2010. The highest volcano is Mount Karisimbi with 4507m, with the oldest volcano being Mount Sabyinyo which lies at 3634m. Mount Bisoke, Mgahinga, Mikeno and Muhabura volcanoes are the other volcanoes within the Volcanoes National park. There is a crater lake, Lake Ngezi on Mount Bisoke.



© Anthony De Lannoy



© Yves Graul/istock

Dian Fossey Tomb Trail

The Mountain Gorillas survive thanks to Dian Fossey, a researcher who was buried at her research center alongside these mountain gorillas to which she dedicated her life.

The trail leading to her tomb and Karisoke Research Center is a beautiful yet challenging 1 hour 45 minute hike up steep slopes where orchids, birdlife and even occasional mountain gorillas can be seen.

Mount Bisoke Crater Lake Hike

Bisoke Volcano, 3,711 m above sea level is located on the DRC and Rwanda border. An eruption in 1957 formed two small cones on the north flank of the volcano, 11 km from the summit, which supports a beautiful crater lake, Lake Ngezi.

Hiking to the crater lake requires four hours up a steep trail from the Bisoke departure point, to reach the summit. The walk around the crater lake rim is highly recommended. Allow seven hours for the entire trip. Lake Ngezi a small, shallow crater lake, is the easiest hike in the park; it takes only three to four hours round-trip from the Bisoke departure point.

Gorilla Families in the Park

The **Sabyinyo group** frequently inhabits the closest territory to the park's edge, between Mount Sabyinyo, from which the group takes its name, and Mount Gahinga. They can usually be reached within a two-hour walk. The group is lead by Guhonda, the largest silverback measured to date, at 220kg.

The **Amahoro**, meaning Peaceful, is lead by Ubumwe, who lives up to his name. There is a steep climb to reach the tranquil Amahoro group, however the climb is well worth it once in contact with this tranquil group.

Umubano Group lead by Charles the Silverback who took part of the Amahoro group to create its own when he matured into the same rank as Ubumwe. The two Silverbacks have met since, but Ubumwe seems to respect Charles and the two groups live peacefully alongside. Indeed, Umubano means "Live Together."

The **Susa group** is currently the largest group of gorillas in the world and the one originally studied by Dr. Dian Fossey. In this group you will also find the oldest known habituated gorilla, Poppy, who was born in 1976. The group takes its name from the Susa River which has its source in the Virunga mountains.

The **Kwitonda group** includes three Silverbacks. This group came across to Rwanda from Uganda and the DRC to establish itself on the slopes of Mount Muhabura.

The **Agashya group** was named after it's commanding Silverback, who's name means "the News". Agashya's take-over was unprecedented: he won the group over by first studying the former leader, Nyakarima and then challenging him. Agashya group is known to spend most of its time on the forested saddle between Mount Sabyinyo and Mount Gahinga.

The **Hirwa group** is an emerging group of members from the other groups. It is the newest group, residing mainly on the foothills of Mount Sabyinyo on the Gahinga side. It's name means "Lucky one".



Gorillas © RDB/Rwanda Tourism



Baby Gorilla © RDB/Rwanda Tourism



© Charles Campbell

Kwita Izina

The timeless Rwandan ceremony *kwita izina* (to give a name) is part of the celebration of the birth of a new child in a family. For three decades this same ceremony has been performed for Rwanda's newly born mountain gorillas by rangers, researchers and those charged with the safekeeping of these unique animals. In 2007 the Ceremony was officially named **Kwita Izina** and has become an exciting part of Rwanda's tourism and conservation calendar, happening in June every year. The event is a celebration of Rwanda's conservation efforts in protecting the endangered mountain gorilla.

3 February 2011 twins were born to Kabatwa. The birth of twins is a rare event for any population of gorillas, and very few cases of twins have been documented in the wild or captivity. During the Kwita Izina ceremony in Kinigi, the seventh gorilla-naming ceremony, 22 gorilla babies, including the pair of twins, received their name. The twins were named Isangano "meeting-place" and Isango "appointment".



Golden Monkey © RDB/Rwanda Tourism

Golden Monkey

Most travelers visit Rwanda's **Volcanoes National Park** to spend time with the famous mountain gorillas but there are other primates to see. Trekking the golden monkey through the bamboo forests they live in, is another unique experience. The **Golden Monkey** is an endangered species.

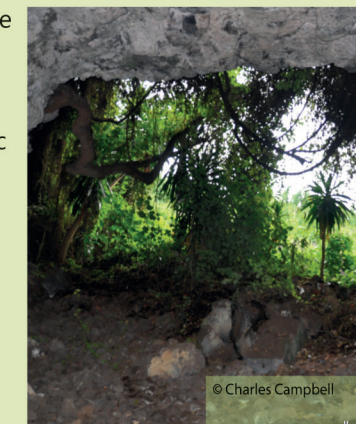
Caving Tourism

There 52 surveyed caves in the Northern province with 15.2 km of cave passages. Most these caves are developed from Cenozoic volcanic rocks. The longest cave in Rwanda is called "Uubuvumo Bwibihonga" a multi-level system of parallel lava tubes with a length of 4,530m.

The **Musanze cave** is 2km long and the most frequently visited cave. It is on the Innes University grounds and lies in the volcanic region dating back 65'million years where the lava flow layers contributed to creating the Albertine Rift Valley. Musanze cave has 31 entrances, most of these being roof collapses. This cave is part of the from lava basaltic layers from the Bisoke and Sabyinyo volcanoes. The cave entrance is vast, exceeding 10km and it is well proportionate with several side passages leading off from the main cave. Bat roots are a feature of the cave and the collapses create an incredible array of coloured shafts of light shining into the cave.

The **Busasamana cave**, a 1km long cave links to a system of several other caves: the Kanzeze, Mudende and Busasamana sectors, which in turn lead to the Mugongo, the Bweza and the Kabari caves. The caves are 8 kms from the main Rubavu-Musanze road near the Busasamana Catholic parish.

Mugongo cave is great for caving and easily located as it is close to Mrs. Carr's property. There are also camping facilities here.



© Charles Campbell