

RWANDA NEWS

THE QUARTERLY TRADE NEWSLETTER FROM RWANDA TOURISM (EUROPE)

ISSUE 3 SUMMER 2004

Changes in Marketing of Rwanda

Rwanda Tourism has been active in the UK and Europe since July 2003. The ORTPN (Office Rwandaise de Tourisme et des Parcs Nationaux) has announced that as of the 1 July 2004, Southern Skies Marketing will no longer represent Rwanda in the UK and Europe and the work will be done in house since the foundations have been laid.

The ORTPN and Southern Skies Marketing would like to thank you for your past and continuous support. All enquiries or requests needs to be addressed to the Rwanda Embassy in London Tel: +44 20 7224 9832 email: uk@ambarwanda.org.uk or to the ORTPN direct in Kigali Tel: +250 576514 email: ortpn@rwanda1.com.

Practical Information on Travelling to Rwanda

Rwanda is a tiny country; 26 340 sq km – the size of Belgium or half the size of Scotland. Rwanda has 5 volcanoes, 23 lakes and numerous rivers. The country lies 1270km west of the Indian Ocean and 2000 km east of the Atlantic – literally in the heart of Africa.

Best time to visit is any time of the year. The long dry season, June to September is the best time for tracking gorillas and for hiking in the Nyungwe Forest since the land is dry underfoot and the malaria is at its lowest. It is however not ideal for photographers since it is very hazy. The short dry season is from December to February. The wet season is the best time to track chimps in Nyungwe, while the months of November to March will hold the greatest appeal for birders, as residents birds are supplemented by Palearctic migrants.

Getting to Rwanda are: direct flights to Kigali: SN Brussels from Brussels, Kenya Airways from Nairobi, Air Tanzania from Dar es Salaam, Rwandair Express from Entebbe (Uganda), Johannesburg (South Africa), Nairobi (Kenya) and Dubai.

Visas are required by all visitors except (for stays of less than three months) by the nationals of UK, Germany, Sweden, Canada, USA, Hong Kong, Burundi, DRC, Kenya, Mauritius, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda. For all others they cost around US\$60, depending on the place of issue.

Following is a typical Rwanda circuit:

Kigali, Rwanda's attractive capital is set in the hills with the city centre on one side and the administrative/government quarter on the other. Kigali is a busy, bustling, colourful city with nearly 1 million inhabitants. The international airport is 8 miles from the centre of town.

The three luxury hotels (+US\$100 pppn) are the Hotel Intercontinental Kigali, Hotel Milles des Collines and the Novotel Kigali Umubano. There are two upper/middle range hotels (US\$60 – US\$100), Hotel Gorillas and Motel le Gami du Centre. There are also numerous middle and budget hotels.

The Kigali Genocide Memorial is a moving experience. A guide takes visitors around the memorial telling the story and showing the skulls and bones of victims as well as graves. The idea behind displaying bones in this and other genocide memorials is to prevent anyone, ever, from claiming 'there was no genocide in Rwanda'. Building stability starts by acknowledging the truth.

There is a wide range of handicrafts offered for sale in the markets. The market opposite the ORTPN office, next to the Milles des Collines has a wide variety. Rwandan men are known for their carving and the women for their weaving. It is possible to watch pots being made at the Twa pottery workshop.

Akagera National Park is a 2 hour drive from Kigali. The Park was re-gazetted in 1998 from 250 000 to 90 000 hectares due to intense human pressure on the Park from the returning refugees. It stretches from north to south along the Tanzania border for approximately 40 miles and at its widest point is less than 20 miles.

Although there might not be an abundance of lion or leopard as in Kenya, there are giraffe, olive baboon, elephant and also numerous hippo dotting the many lakes in the Park. Akagera also has 11 species of antelope, including bushbuck and the elusive sitatunga. Akagera is, after Nyungwe, the most important ornithological site in Rwanda. Less than 20% of the species are common to

both parks. It is the best place in Rwanda to see a good selection of savannah birds and raptors. It is also rich in waterbirds and one of the few places where papyrus endemics can be observed. It is rumoured that the rare shoebill can be seen in the Park though this has not been confirmed. Tsetse flies are common so long sleeved light coloured clothing is advisable.

Akagera Game Lodge is the only lodge in the National Park. It has the prime location overlooking the 60 square mile Lake Ihema. The 60 bedroomed hotel has a commanding view of the lake and the Tanzania hinterland beyond. Since it's re-opening in December 2003, the lodge has been very popular, even with the local market. The lodge has an a la carte/buffet restaurant, pool, conference facilities and tennis courts. Walks, game drives and boat trips can be arranged.

Butare, Rwanda's second city is a 2 hour drive from Kigali on a good tar road. It is a university town with a relaxed atmosphere.

The Mwami Palace at Nyanza gives a unique insight into the Rwandan royalty until it came to its fatal end in 1959. Both modern and traditional architecture are well preserved as a monument to this. The National Cultural Museum has a fascinating display of traditional crafts, with a well-stocked gift shop. This is also one of the few places that the Rwandan ballet performs the traditional Intore dances. The sensual movements mimicking the movements of a bird's wings, are unique to Rwanda, and a major highlight of Rwanda.



Nyungwe Forest National Park is a 2 hour drive from Butare. Nyungwe protects the largest single tract of montane forest remaining in East or Central Africa. It is one of the oldest forests in Africa and it extends for over 650 square miles over the mountainous southwest of Rwanda. It is a true rainforest as it receives in excess of 2000mm of rain annually. The forest harbours 86 mammal species, 280 birds, 120 butterflies, 200 species of trees and about 100 species of orchid. 2–3 metre giant lobelias abound. In the marsh areas Congo clawless otters and Grauer's rush warbler can be found. Not only ardent birders enthuse at Nyungwe; the great blue turaco is magnificent, the unusual paradise monarch is a sight to behold.

The main attraction of Nyungwe Forest is its primates. The 13 primate species that occur in Nyungwe represent nearly 25% of the total number in Africa. Chimp tracking can be arranged and troops of up to 400 Ruwenzori Colubus monkeys can be seen swinging through the trees. Other primates found here are the l'Hoest's monkey, silver monkey, owl faced monkey, red-tailed monkey, Dent's mona monkey, crowned monkey, vervet monkey, olive baboon and grey cheeked mangabey.

The ORTPN guest house is situated just outside the forest, and is at the moment the only place for non-campers to stay. Accommodation is basic but clean with shared ablution facilities. Travellers will be able to access the beautiful waterfalls, unique vegetation and the 13 primate species by foot.

Kibuye is a charming old town with an almost alpine feel about it. The high hills and pretty forest surrounding Lake Kivu are delightful, with rather European scenery, whilst the town is definitely African.

The 22 bedroomed Kibuye Guesthouse is on a beach overlooking the Lake Kivu. The 6th largest lake in Africa it forms a large part of the Rwanda – DRC border, and used to be popular during colonial days as a local holiday resort. Today it still has the beauty of years ago, but more peaceful. Just occasionally you will spot a bather swimming in the cool, amazingly clear water.

Gisenyi is the most northerly port on the Rwandan part of Lake Kivu. It is a three hour drive from Kibuye and an hour from Ruhengeri so a convenient and pretty stop over.

The town is flanked by crumbling colonial mansions.

One can visit the Imbabazi Orphanage that was established by Rosamond Carr in December 1994 for the orphans and displaced children of the genocide. The orphanage currently cares for over 100 orphans. A remarkable lady. Rosamund Carr is the author of *Land of a Thousand Hills: my life in Rwanda*.

The new 4 star Hotel Kivu Sun is due to open this month. It will have 66 air conditioned rooms, 6 luxury suites and 23 family rooms. Light meals can be taken at the Lake View Bar and Terrace and buffet style meals in the Kivu Sands restaurant.

Ruhengeri is the closest town to the Volcanoes National Park (PNV) and is a convenient base from which to track gorillas. Ruhengeri is a 90 minute drive from Kigali and an hour from Gisenye. The accommodation in Ruhengeri is basic with the Hotel Muhabura being the most popular option.

Mountain gorilla tracking in the Virungas is a peerless wildlife experience. The undoubted highlight of the trip will be waiting high in the 13 000 hectare Volcanoes National Park at the Northwest of the country, between the sometimes-misty tops of the 7 volcanoes running along the border of Rwanda, Uganda and the DRC.

A Mountain Gorilla can weigh up to 180 kg, but are amazingly gentle for the amount of power that they possess. Watching the famous Mountain Gorillas daily interaction captivated the American primatologist Dian Fossey for almost two decades. Her life among the gorillas was celebrated in the film *Gorillas in the Mist*. Her and her beloved Digit's graves are also to be seen – hidden away in the forest under huge, almost wise-looking trees.

Tourism is probably integral to the survival of the mountain gorilla; the survival of the mountain gorilla is certainly integral to the growth of Rwanda's tourism industry.

From the 1st of June 2004, a gorilla permit will cost US\$375 cash and can be bought in cash from the ORTPN or a local tour operator. The gorilla treks commence at the ORTPN office in Kinyi, a 30 minute drive from Ruhengeri. There are 4 habituated gorilla groups - the 35 strong Susa Group (3 - 4 hour trek), Sabinyo Group (20 - 30 minute trek), Group Thirteen (1 hour trek) and the Amahora Group (1 - 2 hour trek).

8 permits are issued per day for the four habituated groups, thus a maximum of 32 per day. Tourists are permitted to spend no more than one hour with the gorillas and it is forbidden to eat or smoke in their presence. It is forbidden to approach within 5 metres of the gorillas – though the gorillas do not always obey this rule and will wander over to you!

Rwandan Artefacts Available on New Website

COPABU (*Coopérative des Producteurs Artisanaux de Butare*) is a well-known shop in Butare – the capital of Culture in Rwanda. It is therefore also fitting that it is also the best place to buy Rwandan artifacts, made by artisans that keep the traditional art of intricate and fine basket making and wood carving alive and well. Examples of their work can be viewed at www.copabu.co.rw.

This is their story:

"Like many artisans' structures, mainly their associations and their sales points, ours was destroyed during the genocide of 1994. That event also obstructed mutual confidence and the motivation for joint professional efforts of groups of artisans for some time. Nevertheless, the artisans of Butare managed to regroup and to set sails for a new joint undertaking in September 1996 with the assistance of the GTZ project PASUD (*"Promotion de l'artisanat au Sud du Rwanda"*) right next to our sales shop.

"The massive return of refugees in 1996 helped a great number of artisans to restart their professions. The artisans watched out for markets and production niches in spite of all the problems they still encountered such as financial, logistical and raw material supply, which they face regularly in this border zone far away from the capital.

"However, it was only in August 1997 when the artisans of Butare founded the COPABU - *Inganzo Yacu*, a sales office commonly called "PERMANENT SALES ROOM" of artisan products. The members still produce in their homes on the hills, then they deliver to the sales office in town whenever they've got anything of good quality to sell. The shop is located in the town of Butare, just opposite hotel IBIS."



Woodcarving is predominantly done with Jacaranda and Umusave wood. The sculptures with religious, traditional and modern motives are coloured with paint and sometimes with shoe polish. Apart from sculpture carving, there is also utility products such as plates, mortars and other recipients.

Although **carpentry** developed a lot with the help of sophisticated machinery, there still exists a good number of carpenters using hand tools producing an astonishing quality. You can find an interesting range of toys such as: clown on wheels, building blocks, dancing chicken, drums,

rattles, stilts, finger labyrinths, wooden tower or bird puzzles, etc. It's quite a number of toys you'll usually find only in western countries.



new high-quality products, like document organisers and filing systems.

The art of the **tinsmiths** is the transformation of metal sheets, popularly called galvanised sheets, into objects using folding, riveting and welding techniques. The products are mainly traditional or improved stoves. Other products are water cans, buckets and basins.

Rwanda's **blacksmiths** were already well known during the times of their kings; they produced tools, utility objects and decorative items such as sets of lances, which women decorated with pearls. This work is traditionally done with rudimentary work tools. Their bellows aren't always mechanic; many COPABU members still use skin bellows to heat the iron before it can be brought into shape.



Many people in Rwanda live in poverty. Some have the skills to make baskets or woodcarvings, and do this to feed themselves and their families. By supporting the local craftsmen, you could encourage them to keep the traditional arts alive and earn a living from it, but at the same time, take a memory from Rwanda home.



Basket making - Women, utilising leaves found in the high mountains or in swampy areas traditionally weave baskets. The decorations and traditional motives are painted with natural colours. Two different raw materials are used: banana bark and sisal fibres. Thanks to the training programmes offered by the "Fédération des Associations des Artisans de Butare" (FAAB) they hope to shortly offer a range of

Virunga Lodge Ready to Open

The first phase of Volcanoes Safari's latest property, Virunga Lodge, with the main public areas and 4 bandas is expected to be operational at the beginning of June. A further 6 bandas are to be added once the lodge is operational and are expected to be ready by September. The lodge will be a welcome addition to the area, and will be a perfect resting place after the hour long visit to the Mountain Gorillas in the nearby Parc National des Volcans. The lodge definitely has one of the most spectacular views in the country – on a hilltop between twin lakes, Lake Ruhondo and Lake Bulera, with a view of the volcanoes in the near and far distance.

For more information and bookings, contact Volcanoes Safaris in the UK at Tel: +44 870 8708480, email salesuk@volcanoessafaris.com or visit www.volcanoessafaris.com

Two New Memorial Centres Opens in Rwanda

The Aegis Trust, in collaboration with genocide survivors and the Government of Rwanda, recently announced the opening of the Kigali and Murambi Memorial Centres on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the 1994 Genocide, on the 7th of April, 2004.

The ORTPN would like to encourage travellers to Rwanda to visit the genocide memorials as they want to educate people about what happened there 10 years ago, and to not forget the causes of inaction by the international community.

More info can be found at www.aegistrust.org



RWANDA TOURISM EUROPE

c/o Southern Skies Marketing
Old Boundary House, London Road,
Sunningdale, Berkshire, SL5 0DJ,
United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0) 1344 298 985

Fax: +44 (0) 870 706 0116

info@discover-rwanda.org

www.discover-rwanda.org