



# Travel Planning

## FOR RWANDA

*This document offers useful information on travel to Rwanda, health planning advice & what to pack.*



# About R W A N D A

Rwanda is a landlocked Central African country which lies on a hilly plateau south of the Equator, covering 26,338 square kilometres. Verdant rainforests, volcanic mountain ranges, wetlands and lakes contribute to Rwanda's natural beauty and ecological importance. The central mountains form part of the watershed for the Congo and Nile Rivers. Lake Kivu, one of the Great Rift Valley's freshwater lakes, features popular beaches surrounded by mountains.

The national parks of Rwanda are home to a cluster of unusual and rare animals, especially primates, as well as distinctive mountain and rainforest flora, including over 150 species of magical orchids.

The most famous of Rwanda's national parks is the Volcanoes National Park, high in the Virunga Massif, where visitors flock to see the endangered silverback mountain gorillas in their natural habitat. Rwanda's population is 13,3 million (reported figures as of 2021), and the capital city is Kigali.



## **CURRENCY**

The Rwandan franc (RWF) is the local currency of Rwanda. United States Dollars (USD) are widely accepted across the country, while UK Pound Sterling (GBP) and Euros (EUR) are not widely accepted. Small denominations of United States Dollars should be carried where possible, however, change may only be given in local currency, or change may not be available at all. Foreign Exchange centres are in the main cities, towns and Kigali International Airport.

## **BANKS**

There are banks in the main cities and towns. Automated teller machines (ATMs) are found in Kigali, however, they may not accept all foreign cards.

## **CREDIT CARDS**

Mastercard and Visa Cards are widely accepted in major tourist areas, whereas American Express is accepted to a far lesser extent, and Diners Club Card is not accepted.

## **LANGUAGE**

Rwanda has four official languages, Kinyarwanda, Kiswahili, French and English, which are widely spoken in tourist areas.



## CLIMATE

Rwanda has a temperate year-round climate due to the combination of its tropical location and high altitude, with few seasonal temperature variations. Exceptions include the chilly upper slopes of the Virunga Mountains. Most parts of the country receive significant amounts of rainfall annually, with the highest precipitation occurring from February to April and November to January.

Safari activities are geared up for Rwanda's climate throughout the year.

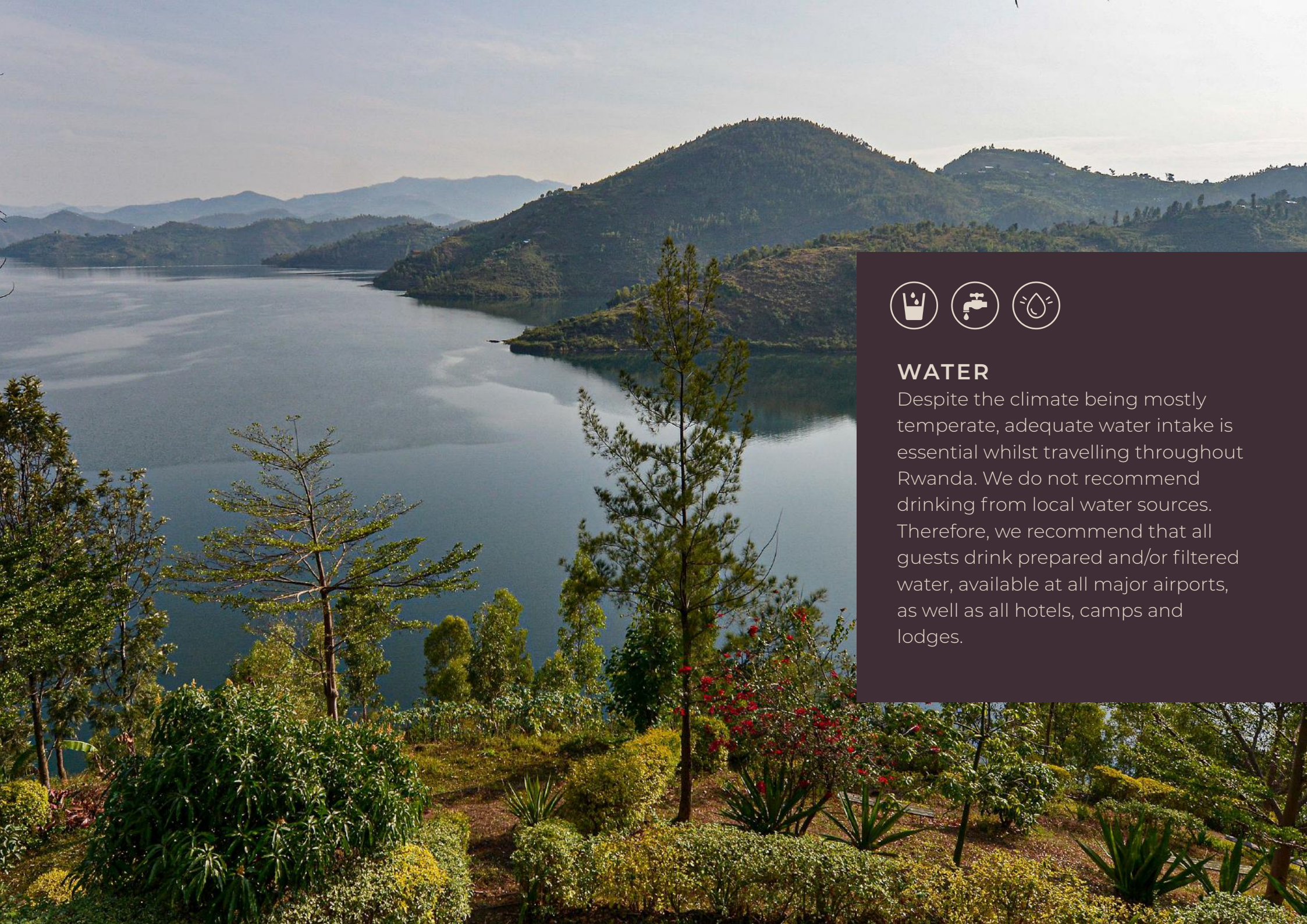
Year-round, it can get cool to very cold at night and in the early morning whilst on safari.

Please refer to our Packing Suggestions in this document for recommended seasonal attire.



## TIME

Rwanda falls into the Central African Time zone (CAT), two hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) during the northern hemisphere's winter. During the northern hemisphere's summer, international Daylight-Saving hours change. During this time, CAT is one hour ahead of GMT.



## **WATER**

Despite the climate being mostly temperate, adequate water intake is essential whilst travelling throughout Rwanda. We do not recommend drinking from local water sources. Therefore, we recommend that all guests drink prepared and/or filtered water, available at all major airports, as well as all hotels, camps and lodges.



## LUGGAGE LIMITATIONS ON SCHEDULED LIGHT AIRCRAFT TRANSFERS

There are strict luggage weight restrictions for all scheduled light aircraft transfers. These restrictions are as follows:

- Camera & Hand Luggage per person is restricted to 5kgs (11 pounds).
- Only Soft-sided bags will be accepted.
- Suitcases, bags with wheels, frames or hard sides will not be permitted on scheduled light aircraft flights.

### Maximum dimensions Soft-sided bags which can be accommodated are as follows:

- 25cm (10 inches) wide x 30cm (12 inches) high and 62cm (24 inches) long.
- Please remember that baggage compartments on light aircraft are only 25cm high (10 inches), so the pilots must be able to manipulate the bag into the compartment.
- A collapsible wheeled luggage frame/trolley (separate from the bag) is allowed as long as the basic dimensions are similar to the bag's.

### Excess Luggage:

- Requirements and costs for excess luggage on any light aircraft transfers vary depending on the charter company, aircraft used and routing. In most cases, you will have to purchase an extra seat which allows for additional 20kgs (44 pounds) per person.





## PASSENGER LIMITATIONS ON SCHEDULED LIGHT AIRCRAFT TRANSFERS

- Besides luggage allowances, light aircraft are designed to carry a specific maximum body weight.
- Many airfields utilised for safari destinations are above 1,000 metres (3,280 feet) above sea level. Many of these airfields are also located in tropical regions, therefore, the permissible aircraft carrying capacity is further reduced.
- Please inform us in advance if guests weigh more than 100kg (220 pounds), as additional weight allowance on the aircraft must be purchased for safety and comfort.
- The costs for this are calculated on request, according to specific region and routing, and provide for a maximum of 70kg (154 pounds) excess weight per passenger.
- These limits apply to guests travelling on a seat rate, scheduled light aircraft transfer basis.
- This requirement may differ if guests have booked sole use of an aircraft or private charter option, in which case the maximum passenger weights will depend on the type of aircraft and the number of passengers booked.

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***“If there was one more thing I could do,  
it would be to go on safari once again.”***

K. BLIXEN



## TRAVEL INSURANCE

- Please note that by law in Rwanda, all visitors must have Fully Comprehensive Travel Insurance Cover including Comprehensive Medical Cover, which must be purchased before travelling.
- Comprehensive Insurance Cover can be extended to cover loss of luggage, personal items, and trip cancellations.
- Depending on your country of origin, a separate Comprehensive Medical Travel Insurance policy may be required, over and above your Fully Comprehensive Travel Insurance policy.
- Please ensure you have these Insurance Documents with you at all times during your trip.



## PASSPORT AND VISA REQUIREMENTS, INCLUDING TRAVELLING WITH CHILDREN

- Rwanda does not require visas for visitors from several countries, therefore, all visitors must get in touch with their local Rwandan Embassy, Consulate, or other Rwandan Representative Office, to determine whether a visa is required to enter Rwanda.
- Although visas are issued at ports of entry into Rwanda, we recommend that all visitors to Rwanda obtain visas before arrival, especially for visitors embarking on a gorilla trekking safari.
- Visitors to Rwanda must possess a passport valid for at least six months from the date of travel and should have at least two blank pages available in their passport.
- It is advisable for visitors who intend to travel to neighbouring East Africa and/or additional African countries to have sufficient passport pages in place and, where applicable, apply for multiple entry visas.
- For more information, visit [https://irembo.gov.rw/home/citizen/all\\_services](https://irembo.gov.rw/home/citizen/all_services)





## TRAVELLING WITH CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 18 YEARS:

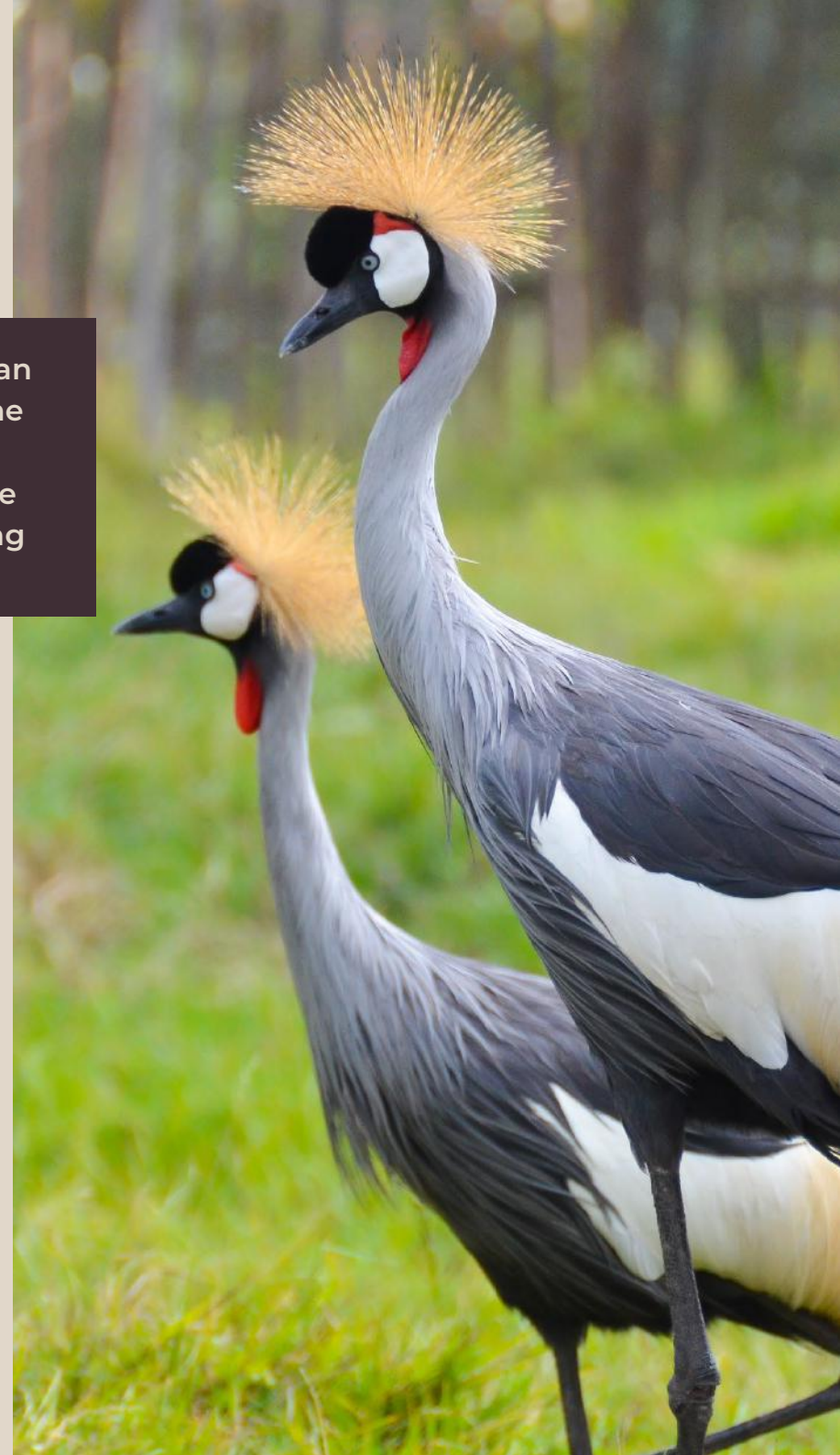
- Please contact your local Rwandan Embassy, Consulate or other Rwandan Representative Office for advice regarding travelling with children, as the following guidelines may change at short notice.
- Parents of children under the age of 18 years may be required to produce certified copies of the following documentation when entering or leaving the borders of Rwanda:

### **Both parents travelling with children:**

- A certified copy of the unabridged birth certificate of each child must include the full names of both the biological father and mother, the identity numbers, and the place of birth.

### **One parent travelling with children:**

- A certified copy of the unabridged birth certificate of each child must include the full names of both the biological father and mother, the identity numbers, and the place of birth.
- An affidavit signed by the parent who is not travelling authorising the parent who is travelling with each child to do so, together with a certified copy of the non-travelling parent's passport or identity document and contact details.
- If the parent travelling with each child has been granted full parental rights and responsibilities or is the legal guardian of each child, they must provide a certified copy of the court order granting them those rights.
- If one parent or legal guardian is deceased, the parent or legal guardian travelling must provide a certified copy of the death certificate.





### **An adult travelling with children who are not their biological children:**

- A certified copy of the unabridged birth certificate of each child must include the full names of both the biological father and mother, the identity numbers, and the place of birth.
- An affidavit from each child's parents or legal guardians confirming that they have permission to travel with each child.
- Certified copies of the identity documents or passports of each child's parents or legal guardians.
- Certified proof of the contact details of each child's parents or legal guardians.



### **Children travelling unaccompanied by an adult:**

- A certified copy of the unabridged birth certificate of each child must include the full names of both the biological father and mother, the identity numbers, and the place of birth.
- An affidavit of proof of consent for each child to travel from both parents or legal guardians. If only one parent or legal guardian provides proof of consent, each child must also travel with a certified copy of a court order granting that parent or legal guardian full parental responsibilities.
- A certified copy of a letter/affidavit from the person in authority in Rwanda who will be responsible for each child on arrival. This letter/affidavit must include the said person of authority's contact number, residential address, and all contact details for where each child will be staying in Rwanda.
- A certified copy of the identity document, passport, visa or permanent residence permit of the person in authority who is to be responsible for each child on arrival.
- Certified proof of the contact details of each child's parents or legal guardians.



## PLEASE NOTE

- As indicated, all supporting documents required should be certified copies.
- Parental consent documents must be issued within six months before the date of travel.
- Families travelling with children under the age of 18 years may be restricted from entering and/or departing from Rwanda without the above-mentioned documentation.
- The above-mentioned documentation must be available when visiting neighbouring countries when travelling with minors, where the point of entry and/or exit is Rwanda.
- For all documentation, it is recommended that should the documentation not be in English, an English version is obtained.

**For all VISA requirements, including the full application process and costs, please contact your local Rwandan Embassy, Consulate or other Rwandan Representative Office for further details.**





## HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

- Rwanda is an endemic Malaria area, therefore, Malaria prophylactics are strongly recommended. Please contact your Local Travel Clinic or Medical Practitioner before travel to determine the appropriate anti-Malaria measures. The use of additional precautionary measures, such as topical insect repellents and wearing long-sleeved clothing, long trousers and socks when outside at night are recommended, especially when on safari.
- It is inadvisable for pregnant women to visit Malaria areas.
- The southwestern region of Rwanda is an endemic Sleeping Sickness (African Trypanosomiasis) area, however, the incidence of human transmission in recent years has been low. No prophylactics are available, therefore, precautionary measures, such as topical insect repellents and wearing long-sleeved clothing, long trousers and socks when outdoors, are recommended, especially when on safari.
- Pregnant women must contact their Local Travel Clinic or Medical Practitioner before travelling to Rwanda to determine whether travelling to Rwanda is advisable.

- Rwanda falls into the Yellow Fever belt of Africa. A Yellow Fever vaccination certificate is required to enter and exit Rwanda. Furthermore, travellers arriving from or travelling onwards to other countries in Africa and/or the Yellow Fever belt of South America require a Yellow Fever vaccination certificate.
- Although additional vaccinations (such as Hepatitis A and B, Polio, Tetanus and others) are not mandatory, certain vaccinations may be recommended by your Local Travel Clinic or Medical Practitioner.
- Should you be on prescription medication or require any other types of medications, please ensure you have an adequate supply of all your medicines for the duration of your trip.
- For prescription medications, it is recommended that you have a copy of the original prescription and keep all medicines in their original labelled packaging.



**Please contact your Local Travel Clinic or Medical Practitioner well before your departure date regarding all the above-mentioned health requirements.**

**Vaccination requirements may be subject to change at short notice.**



## PLASTICS

Please note that all single-use polyethene (plastic) bags and containers are banned in Rwanda and must not be brought into the country.



## GORILLA PERMITS

- **Wearing of masks is required to take part in gorilla trekking safaris.**
- **Each visitor who applies for gorilla trekking permits pays the cost of these health checks.**

- The cost of gorilla trekking permits in Rwanda is payable in USD (United States Dollars) and depends on the number of days booked for gorilla trekking. Prices are subject to change without prior notice.
- Only a limited number of permits are available in each gorilla park across the region, therefore, it is essential to book well before travelling.
- For the permits to be fully secured, they have to be fully paid for at the time of booking confirmation.
- The trekking permits are Non-refundable if cancelled for any reason.
- Each permit allows visitors one hour with the gorillas once they are located. Sightings cannot be guaranteed, but the guides will do their utmost to find them.
- Please note that gorilla trekking can be physically demanding. Trekking involves several hours of hiking at higher, colder elevations over challenging terrain to locate the gorillas. Please get in touch with your Local Travel Clinic or Medical Practitioner before purchasing a gorilla trekking permit if you have any concerns about your ability to go gorilla trekking.
- Gorillas are genetically very similar to humans, and many infectious diseases carried by humans can be transmitted to gorillas.
- To protect gorillas from disease, no children under the age of 15 years nor people with illnesses may go trekking.



## **PHOTOGRAPHY**

Please be mindful of others when taking photographs at all times. Should you wish to photograph local people, particularly children, please be courteous and ask permission before taking pictures. Some local people do not wish to be photographed for cultural reasons.

Photography is prohibited at certain locations, including government buildings, museums, art galleries, private houses, etc. These areas are usually clearly marked. If in doubt, please ask, otherwise, camera equipment can be confiscated. Flash photography may be prohibited in certain night-time situations, notably when on safari. While game viewing, be respectful of animal life and your fellow travellers. Do not startle or disturb animals or birds whilst taking photographs.

## **SHOPPING**

In major cities and towns, your hotel or guesthouse concierge will assist you with locating the best local shops and handicraft markets to visit. Curio shops can be found at numerous lodges/camps throughout Rwanda.



## POWER SUPPLY

All electrical appliances run on 230V (AC – alternating current). Special adaptors for charging photographic equipment, mobile phones, laptops, tablets, hairdryers, etc., are required. These can be purchased at major airports and certain shopping centres.

Some hotels and lodges may be able to supply guests with adaptors – however, we recommend that you carry your own adaptors and converters, particularly if you have specific charging devices that operate at different currents/voltages. Some safari camps/lodges may not have 230V (AC – alternating current) and may operate on solar-powered 12V electricity (direct current – DC). Please bring spare batteries that can be charged at the camp/lodge while you are out on safari activities.



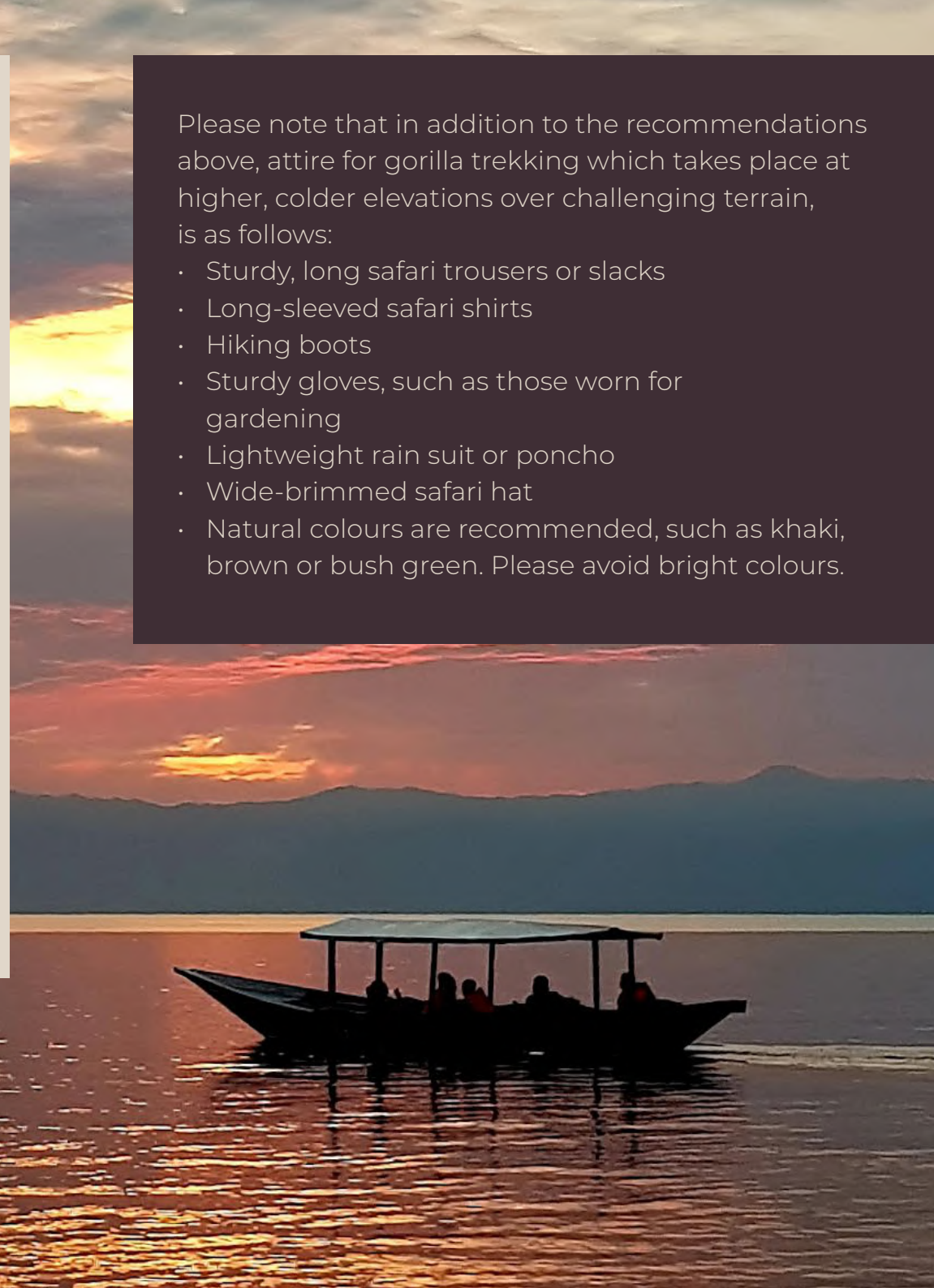
## SUGGESTED PACKING LIST

### CLOTHING

- Sun hat
- Golf shirts and/or T-shirts – preferably with a sleeve to protect your shoulders from the sun
- Long-sleeved cotton shirts
- Shorts and/or skirts
- Long trousers/slacks
- Comfortable walking shoes such as trainers, tennis shoes or similar sports shoes
- Sandals
- Swimming costume
- Lightweight jersey for summer evenings
- A warm jacket and/or fleece jacket is recommended not only for winter but also year-round whilst on safari
- Light rain gear or waterproof jacket
- Formal attire for your stay at prestigious city hotels.

Please note that in addition to the recommendations above, attire for gorilla trekking which takes place at higher, colder elevations over challenging terrain, is as follows:

- Sturdy, long safari trousers or slacks
- Long-sleeved safari shirts
- Hiking boots
- Sturdy gloves, such as those worn for gardening
- Lightweight rain suit or poncho
- Wide-brimmed safari hat
- Natural colours are recommended, such as khaki, brown or bush green. Please avoid bright colours.





## EQUIPMENT/OTHER

- Good quality sunglasses with UV protection – preferably polarised
- Personal toiletries
- Moisturising cream and suntan lotion – SPF 30 or higher recommended
- Insect repellent for topical application
- Torch
- Rwanda wildlife and/or bird guides, especially if you have specific areas of interest
- Binoculars
- Camera equipment, including spare batteries, chargers, film, memory cards, memory sticks, etc.
- Converter plugs to 220V Alternating current, and 12V Direct current, as detailed in the section on power supply above.
- Waterproof/dustproof bag or cover for your camera
- Dive card and logbook (if applicable)
- An adequate supply of all prescription medications and/or other medicines required for the duration of your trip
- Visas, tickets, passports, money, credit cards, insurance documents, etc.



**PLEASE NOTE:** There may be a restriction on luggage limits on your journey – please ensure that you have the details from your agent according to your itinerary. Please ask your agent ahead of time if you would like details on the feasibility and costs of taking excess luggage with you, as noted above in Luggage and Passenger Limitations on Scheduled Light Aircraft Transfers.



## GRATUITIES GUIDELINES

We would like to reiterate that tipping is not compulsory. Guests should not feel obliged to do so. Tipping should be offered only by choice, subject to the service received.

As such, we have enclosed a brief guideline to assist guests. In addition, guests may wish to add a nominal amount for incidentals (subject to personal budget choice) – i.e. if additional activities are booked once on their journey, if travel arrangements change for any reason, in acknowledgement of good service received in another area, etc.



## USD GRATUITIES GUIDELINE

### SERVICE

Meet & Greet  
Airport Transfer Driver  
Hotel / Airport Porters  
Guides for City Sightseeing (Half Day)  
Guides for City Sightseeing (Full Day)  
Local Safari Guides at camps/lodges  
Local Safari Trackers at camps/lodges  
Housekeepers  
General staff at camps/lodges  
*- Gratuities are then shared among the general staff*  
Meals at Restaurant, incl Room Services

### OUR RECOMMENDATION

**US\$ 5** per person, per Meet & Greet  
**US\$ 10** per person, per transfer  
**US\$ 2** per person per bag movement  
**US\$ 10** per person per Half Day  
**US\$ 20** per person per Full Day  
**US\$ 20** per person per day  
**US\$ 15** per person per day  
**US\$ 5** per person per night  
**US\$ 15** per person per day  
**10-15%** \*Unless already included



