

Rwanda

Mention Rwanda to anyone with a small measure of geopolitical consciousness, and they'll no doubt recall images of the horrific genocide that brutalised this tiny country in 1994. In the span of 100 days, an estimated one million Tutsis and moderate Hutus were systematically butchered by the Interahamwe in one of the most savage genocides in the history of mankind.

While the scars still run deep, Rwanda has done a remarkable job of healing its wounds and turning towards the future with a surprising measure of optimism. The government has taken measures to eliminate tribal identities, and successfully rallied the country under the unifying Rwandan banner. And, in the hopes of stimulating its developing economy through ecotourism, the country is protecting its most vital natural resource – the mountain gorilla.

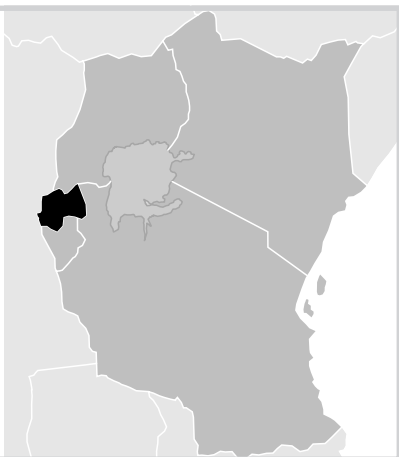
Forming a natural frontier with the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC; formerly Zaire) and Uganda, the Virunga volcanoes are home to some of the world's last remaining mountain gorillas. Tracking these primate relatives through bamboo forests and equatorial jungles is for many the highlight of their African travels.

Of course, 'Le Pays des Mille Collines' or the Land of a Thousand Hills as it is frequently known, isn't all monkey business. On the contrary, Rwanda is a lush country of endless mountains and stunning scenery. The shores of Lake Kivu conceal some of the best inland beaches on the continent, while Parc National Nyungwe Forest protects extensive tracts of montane rainforest.

Given its dark history, travellers in East Africa are often unsure about crossing the border into Rwanda. However, the country remains stable and peaceful, and its attempts to build a sustainable ecotourism industry are certainly worth your support.

FAST FACTS

- **Area** 26,338 sq km
- **Birthplace of** Paul Kagame
- **Capital** Kigali
- **Country Code** 📞 250
- **Famous for** Dian Fossey, mountain gorillas, *Hotel Rwanda*
- **Languages** Kinyarwanda, French and English
- **Money** Rwandan franc (RFr); US\$1 = RFr552; €1 = RFr710
- **Population** 10.2 million



HIGHLIGHTS

- **Parc National des Volcans** (p562) Hike along the forested slopes of the Virungas in search of silverback gorillas and golden monkeys
- **Parc National de Nyungwe** (p579) Trek through steamy rainforests in search of colobus monkeys and chimpanzees
- **Parc National de L'Akagera** (p585) Have a Rwandan-style safari experience in this up-and-coming game park
- **Gisenyi** (p572) Kick back with a passionfruit cocktail on the sandy shores of Lake Kivu
- **Kigali Memorial Centre** (p553) Confront the horrors of the genocide at this haunting memorial on the outskirts of the capital

CLIMATE & WHEN TO GO

The average daytime temperature in Rwanda is around a pleasant 24°C with a possible maximum of 30°C. In the higher mountainous regions, which take up a lot of the country's space, the daytime range is as low as 10° to 15°C. There are four discernible seasons: the long rains from mid-March to mid-May, the long dry from mid-May to September, the short rains from October to mid-December and the short dry from mid-December to mid-March. It rains more frequently and heavily in the northeast, where volcanoes are covered by verdant rainforest. The summit of Karisimbi (4507m), the highest of these volcanoes and the highest peak in Rwanda, is often covered with snow and is prone to sleet.

For more information on Rwanda's climate, see the climate charts on p606.

Rwanda can be visited at any time of year – if you don't like getting wet however, you will want to avoid the long rains of mid-March to mid-May. The dry season from mid-May to September is easier for tracking mountain gorillas, but the endless hills can look quite dry and barren, a contrast to the verdant greens of the wet season. Peak season for gorilla tracking is July and August; travelling outside this time means it is easier to arrange a permit.

For details about planning your trip, and what to bring, see the boxed text, p14.

HISTORY

For detail on Rwanda's history prior to independence in 1962, see p25.

Decolonisation & Independence

Rwanda and neighbouring Burundi were colonised by Germany and later Belgium, both of whom played on ethnic differences to divide and conquer the population. Power was concentrated in the hands of the minority Tutsi, with the Tutsi *mwami* (king) playing the central role in political and legislative decision-making.

In 1956, Mwami Rudahigwa called for independence from Belgium, which influenced Rwanda's colonial occupiers to switch allegiance to the Hutu majority. The Tutsi favoured fast-track independence, while the Hutus wanted the introduction of democracy followed later by independence.

After the death of Rudahigwa in 1959, tribal tensions flared as the 'Hutu Revolution' resulted in the deaths of an estimated 20,000 to 100,000 Tutsis. Another 150,000 Tutsis were driven from the country, and forced to resettle as refugees in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania.

Following independence in 1962, the Hutu majority came to power under Prime Minister Gregoire Kayibanda, who introduced quotas for Tutsis that limited their opportunities for education and work. In the fresh round of bloodshed that followed, thousands more Tutsis were killed, and tens of thousands fled across the borders.

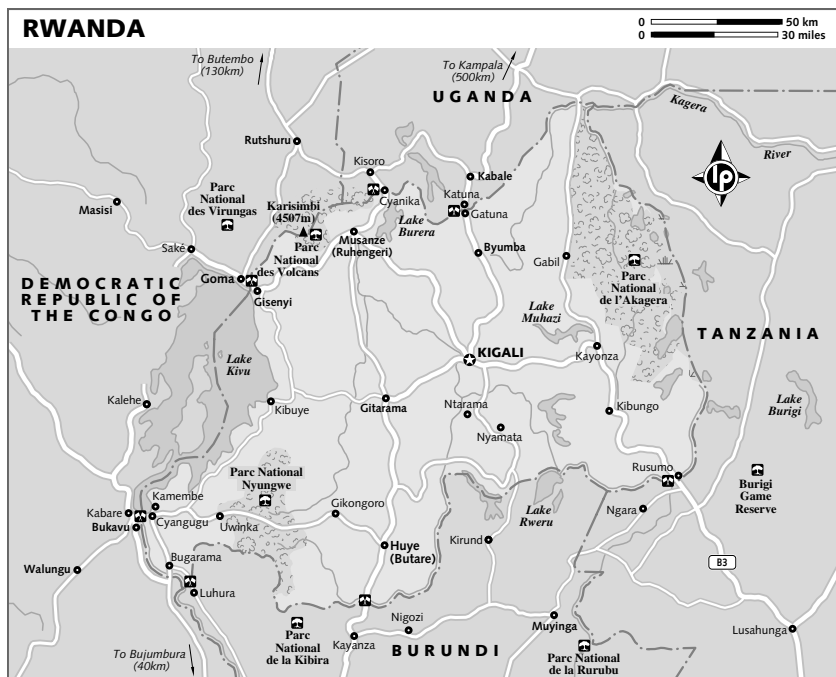
Intertribal tensions erupted once again in 1972 when tens of thousands of Hutu were massacred in Burundi by the Tutsi-dominated government in reprisal for a coup attempt. The

HOW MUCH?

- **Tracking the mountain gorillas** US\$500
- **Fresh fish at a decent restaurant** US\$5 to US\$10
- **Internet access per hour** US\$1 to US\$2
- **New Times newspaper** US\$0.50
- **100km bus ride** US\$2

LONELY PLANET INDEX

- **Litre of petrol** US\$1 to US\$2
- **Litre of bottled water** US\$0.75
- **Primus Beer 720ml** US\$2
- **Souvenir T-shirt** US\$10
- **Street snack (beef brochettes)** US\$1



slaughter reignited old hatreds in Rwanda, which prompted Major General Juvenal Habyarimana to oust Kayibanda in 1973.

During the early years of his regime, Habyarimana made progress towards healing tribal divisions, and the country enjoyed relative economic prosperity. However, events unfolding in Uganda in the 1980s were to have a profound impact on the future of Rwanda.

In 1986, Yoweri Museveni became president of Uganda after his National Resistance Army (NRA) fought a brutal bush war to remove General Tito Okello from power. One of Museveni's key lieutenants was the current Rwandan President Paul Kagame, who capitalised on the victory by joining together with other exiled Tutsis to form the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF).

The Civil War Erupts

On 1 October 1990, 5000 well-armed soldiers of the RPF invaded Rwanda. All hell broke loose. Two days later at Habyarimana's request, France, Belgium and DRC flew in troops to help the Rwandan army repel the invasion.

With foreign support assured, the Rwandan army went on a rampage against the Tutsis, as well as any Hutu suspected of having collaborated with the RPF. Thousands of people were shot or hacked to death, and countless others indiscriminately arrested, herded into football stadiums or police stations and left there without food or water for days.

Many died. Congolese Hutu troops joined in the carnage. Once again thousands of Tutsi refugees fled to Uganda. However, the initial setback for the RPF was only temporary as President Museveni was keen to see the repatriation of the now 250,000 Tutsi refugees living in western Uganda.

While he fervently denied such allegations, Museveni allegedly helped to re-organise and re-equip the RPF. In 1991, Kagame's forces invaded Rwanda for a second time, and by 1993 was garrisoned only 25km outside of Kigali.

With Habyarimana backed into a corner, the warring parties were brought to the negotiating table in Arusha, Tanzania. Negotiations stalled, hostilities were renewed, and French troops were flown in to protect foreign nationals in Kigali, though they were accused

by the RPF of assisting the Rwandan army. A report released in 2008 by the Rwandan government accused the French government of committing war crimes, though all allegations were fervently denied by the present administration.

Meanwhile, with morale in the Rwandan army fading fast, the RPF launched an all-out offensive on the capital. Once again backed into corner, Habyarimana invited the RPF to attend a conference of regional presidents. Power sharing was on the agenda.

Tragically, on 6 April 1994, the airplane carrying Habyarimana and Cyprien Ntaryamira, the President of Burundi, was shot down by a surface-to-air missile while on approach to Kigali airport. It will probably never be known who fired the missile, though most observers believe it was Hutu extremists who had been espousing ethnic cleansing over the airwaves of Radio TV Libre de Mille Collines.

Regardless of who was responsible, the event unleashed one of the 20th century's worst explosions of blood letting.

The Genocide

In the 100 days that followed, extremists among Habyarimana's Hutu political and military supporters embarked on a well-planned 'final solution' to the Tutsi 'problem'. One of the principle architects of the genocide was the cabinet chief of the Ministry of Defence, Colonel Theoneste Bagosora, who had been in charge of training the Interahamwe ("those who stand together") militia for more than a year.

One of Bagosora's first acts was to direct the army to kill the 'moderate' Hutu prime minister, Agathe Uwilingiyimana, as well as 10 Belgian UN peacekeepers. The killing of the UN peacekeepers prompted Belgium to withdraw all of its troops – precisely what Bagosora had calculated – which paved the way for the genocide to begin in earnest.

Rwandan army and Interahamwe death squads ranged at will over the countryside, killing, looting and burning, and roadblocks were set up in every town and city to prevent Tutsis from escaping. Every day, thousands of Tutsi and any Hutu suspected of sympathising with them or their plight were butchered on the spot. The streets of Kigali were littered with dismembered corpses, and the stench of rotting flesh was everywhere.

Those who attempted to take refuge in religious missions or churches did so in vain. In some cases, it was the nuns and priests themselves who betrayed the fugitives to the death squads. Any mission that refused the death squads access was simply blown apart.

Perhaps the most shocking part of the tragedy was the enthusiasm with which ordinary Hutu – men, women and even children as young as 10 years old – joined in the carnage. The perpetrators of the massacre were caught up in a tide of blind hatred, fear and mob mentality, which was inspired, controlled and promoted under the direction of their political and military leaders.

The UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) was in Rwanda throughout the genocide, but was powerless to prevent the killing due to an ineffective mandate. Although UN Force Commander Lt General Romeo Dallaire had been warning senior UN staff and diplomats about the coming bloodshed, his warnings went unheeded.

The international community left Rwanda to face its fate. While the RPF eventually succeeded in pushing the Rwandan army and the Interahamwe into DRC and Burundi, more than one million people were killed, while another two million were huddled in refugee camps across the border.

UNAMIR was finally reinforced and giving a more open mandate in July, but it was in the words of Dallaire, 'too much, too late'. The genocide was already over – the RPF had taken control of Kigali.

The Aftermath

Of course, that is far from the end of the story. Within a year of the RPF victory, a legal commission was set up in Arusha (Tanzania) to try those accused of involvement in the genocide. However, many of the main perpetrators – the Interahamwe and former senior army officers – fled into exile out of the reach of the RPF.

Some went to Kenya, where they enjoyed the protection of President Moi, who long refused to hand them over. Others – including Colonel Theoneste Bagosora, the principle architect of the genocide, and Ferdinand Nahimana, the director of the notorious Radio TV Libre de Mille Collines, which actively encouraged Hutus to butcher Tutsis – fled to Cameroon where they enjoyed the protection of that country's security boss, John Fochive. However, when Fochive was sacked by the

newly elected president of Cameroon, Paul Biya, the Rwandan exiles were arrested.

Of greater importance were the activities of the Interahamwe and former army personnel in the refugee camps of DRC and Tanzania. Determined to continue their fight against the RPF, they spread fear among the refugees that if they returned to Rwanda, they would be killed. When Rwanda began to demand the repatriation of the refugees, the grip of the Interahamwe on the camps was so complete that few dared move.

What was of most concern to the RPF was that the Interahamwe was using the refugee camps as staging posts for raids into Rwanda, with the complicity of the Congolese army. By 1996, Rwanda was openly warning DRC that if these raids did not stop, the consequences would be dire.

The raids continued, and the RPF held true to its threat by mounting a lightning strike two-day campaign into DRC, targeting one of the main refugee camps north of Goma. The Interahamwe fled deep into the jungles of Congo, which allowed hundreds of thousands of refugees to return home to Rwanda.

Events changed in October of 1996 when a new guerrilla movement known as the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo/Zaire, led by Laurent Kabila, emerged with the secret support of Rwanda and Uganda. The rebels, ably supported by Rwandan and Ugandan regulars, swept through eastern DRC, and by December were in control of every town and city in the region.

The Congolese army, alongside the Interahamwe and former Rwandan army personnel, retreated west in disarray towards Kisangani, looting and pillaging as they went. However, the grip the Interahamwe had on the refugee camps was finally broken, which allowed the remaining refugees to stream back into Rwanda, not only from DRC, but also from Tanzania.

Faced with a huge refugee resettlement task, the government began to build new villages throughout the country. Huge tracts of Parc National de l'Akagera (p585) were designated as a national park, and given over to this 'villagisation' program, along with much of the northwest region, which had previously hosted some of the most intense battles of the civil war.

The Healing Begins

Rwanda has done a remarkable job healing its wounds, and has achieved an astonishing level of safety and security in a remarkably short space of time – albeit with considerable help from a guilty international community that ignored the country in its darkest hour. Visiting Kigali today, it is hard to believe the horror that swept across this land in 1994, though the scars are much more visible in the countryside.

On the international front however, things have been rather less remarkable. In 1998, Rwanda and Uganda joined forces to oust their former ally Laurent Kabila. What ensued was Africa's first great war, sucking in as many as nine neighbours at its height, and costing an estimated 3 to 5 million deaths, mostly from disease and starvation.

Rwanda and Uganda soon fell out, squabbling over the rich resources that were there for the plunder in DRC. Rwanda backed the Rally for Congolese Democracy, Uganda the Movement for the Liberation of Congo, and the two countries fought out a brutal and prolonged proxy war.

Peace treaties were signed in 2002, and foreign forces were withdrawn from DRC, though if and when an international inquiry is launched, Rwanda may find itself facing accusations of war crimes. Rwanda's motives for entering the fray were to wipe out remnants of the Interahamwe militia and former soldiers responsible for the genocide, but somewhere along the line, elements in the army may have lost sight of the mission.

Back on the domestic front, Paul Kagame assumed the presidency in 2000, and was overwhelmingly endorsed at the ballot box in presidential elections in 2003 that saw him take 94% of the vote. Meanwhile, the search for justice continues at home and abroad – for more information, see the boxed text, p546.

An Optimistic Future

Looking at the bigger picture, Rwanda remains the home to two tribes, the Hutu and the Tutsi. The Hutu presently outnumber the Tutsi by more than four to one, and while the RPF government is one of national unity with a number of Hutu representatives, it's viewed in some quarters as a Tutsi government ruling over a predominantly Hutu population.

However, the RPF government has done an impressive job of promoting reconciliation, and restoring trust between the two

VOICES AGAINST GENOCIDE

While it's difficult to convey the enormity of the Rwandan genocide, the following quotes describe the horrors that unleashed themselves on this tiny country during a brief period of madness in 1994.

- 'Genocide is any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life, calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; [and] forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.' – genocide as defined by the UN Convention of 1948
- 'The dead of Rwanda accumulated at nearly three times the rate of Jewish dead during the Holocaust. It was the most efficient mass killings since the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.' – US journalist Philip Gourevitch, author of *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families: Stories from Rwanda*
- 'I lay down again among the dead bodies. It was three days after the killings, so the bodies stank. The Interahamwe would pass by without entering the room, and dogs would come to eat the bodies. I lived there for 43 days.' – Rwandan Valentine Iribagiza, who survived the genocide
- 'The horror of Rwanda is too high a price to pay for a very vaporous and whimsical notion of what constitutes inviolable territorial boundaries.' – Nigerian author Wole Soyinka, the first African to win the Nobel Prize in Literature.
- 'During the 1994 Rwandan genocide against the Tutsis, the OAU (Organisation of African Unity) was furiously doing the watutsi.' – Ghanaian economist George Ayittey, president of the Free Africa Foundation
- 'What I have come to realise as the root of it all, however, is the fundamental indifference of the world community to the plight of seven to eight million black Africans in a tiny country that had no strategic or resource value to any world power. An overpopulated little country

communities. This is no small achievement after the horrors that were inflicted on the Tutsi community during the genocide of 1994, especially since it would have been all too easy for the RPF to embark on a campaign of revenge and reprisal.

On the contrary, Kagame and his government are attempting to build a society with a place for everyone, regardless of tribe. There are no more Tutsis, no more Hutus, only Rwandans. Idealistic perhaps, but it is also realistically the only hope for the future.

THE CULTURE

The National Psyche

Tribal conflict has torn Rwanda apart during much of the independence period, culminating in the horrific genocide that unfolded in 1994. With that said, there are basically two schools of thought when it comes to looking at Rwandan identity.

The colonial approach of the Belgians was to divide and rule, issuing ID cards that di-

vided up the population along strict tribal lines. They tapped the Tutsis as leaders to help control the Hutu majority, building on the foundations of pre-colonial society in which the Tutsi were considered more dominant. Later, as independence approached, they switched sides, pitting Hutu against Tutsi in a new conflict, which simmered on and off until the 1990s when it exploded onto the world stage.

In the new Rwanda, the opposite is true. Tribal identities have been systematically eliminated, and everyone is now treated as a Rwandan. The new government is at pains to present a singular identity, and blames the Belgians for categorising the country along tribal lines that set the stage for the savagery that followed. Rwanda was a peaceful place beforehand: Hutu and Tutsi lived side by side for generations, and intermarriage was common – or so the story goes.

The truth, as always, is probably somewhere in between. Rwanda was no oasis before

that turned in on itself and destroyed its own people, as the world watched and yet could not manage to find the political will to intervene.' – Lieutenant-General Roméo Alain Dallaire, who served as force commander of UNAMIR during the Rwandan genocide

- 'If the pictures of tens of thousands of human bodies being gnawed on by dogs do not wake us out of our apathy, I do not know what will.' – Former Secretary General of the UN Kofi Annan, who served as Under-Secretary of Peace Keeping Operations during the Rwandan genocide
- 'There was a glaring and tragic lack of political will to intervene to stop the genocide, especially on the part of the most powerful members of the UN organisation.' – Former Under-Secretary General of the UN Ibrahim Gambari
- 'It didn't happen under my administration. It happened under me.' – Former United States President Bill Clinton
- 'You kept quiet... When these victims wanted your help to survive, you kept quiet.' – Rwandan President Paul Kagame
- 'We all knew we would die, no question. The only question was how. Would they chop us in pieces? With their machetes they would cut your left hand off. Then they would disappear and reappear a few hours later to cut off your right hand. A little later they would return for your left leg etc. They went on till you died. They wanted to make you suffer as long as possible. There was one alternative: you could pay soldiers so they would just shoot you.' – Manager of the Hotel des Mille Collines, Paul Rusesabagina, whose heroic acts during the genocide were portrayed in the movie *Hotel Rwanda*
- 'If there is one thing sure in this world, it is certainly this: that it will not happen to us a second time.' – Jewish-Italian chemist and holocaust survivor Primo Levi, author of *Survival in Auschwitz*
- 'When they said 'never again' after the holocaust, was it meant for some people and not for others.' – Rwandan Apollon Katahizi, who survived the genocide

the colonial powers arrived, but it was a sophisticated state compared to many others in Africa at this time. However, Tutsi probably had a better time of it than Hutus, something that the Belgians were able to exploit as they sought control.

But, it is true to say that there was no history of major bloodshed between the two peoples before 1959, and the foundations of this violence were laid by the Belgian insistence on ethnic identity and their cynical political manipulation. The leaders of the genocide merely took this policy to its extreme, first promoting tribal differences, and then playing on them to manipulate a malleable population.

Paul Kagame is trying to put the past behind, and create a new Rwanda for Rwandans. Forget the past? No. But do learn from it, and move on to create a new spirit of national unity.

All this of course will take time, maybe a generation or more, but what has been

achieved in just over a decade is astonishing. Rwandans are taking pride in their country once more, investment is on the boil, and people are once again optimistic about their future. The real challenge, however, is to make sure that the countryside comes along for the ride.

At present, many of the investors in Kigali are overseas Tutsi finally returning home, and many of the poorest farmers in the countryside are Hutus who have always tilled the land. To avoid the divisions of the past once again surfacing in the new Rwanda, democratic development that favours all – urban and rural, rich and poor – and is blind to tribal ethnicity is required.

As East Africa moves towards greater economic and political integration once more, it is to be hoped that Rwanda will be invited along for the ride. In an ideal world, the ethnic divide between Hutu and Tutsi may become submerged in a wider mosaic of regional peoples.

THE SLOW HAND OF JUSTICE

Following a slow and shaky start, the **International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda** (www.ict.rw) has managed to net most of the major suspects wanted for involvement in the 1994 genocide.

The tribunal was established in Arusha, Tanzania in 1995, but was initially impeded in its quest for justice by the willingness of several African countries to protect suspects. Countries such as Cameroon and Kenya long harboured Kigali's most wanted, frustrating the Rwandan authorities in their attempts to seek justice. However, due to changes in attitude or government, some big fish have been netted in the last decade.

Most important was former Rwandan Prime Minister Jean Kambanda, one of the first to be tried in 1998, who filed a guilty plea and provided the trial with much inside information on other architects of the genocide. His was the first-ever conviction of a head of state for the crime of genocide.

Many of the former ministers of the interim cabinet that presided over the country during the genocide have also been located. Since the 1996 change of government in Cameroon, the authorities there have arrested many suspects including the most senior military figures who oversaw the killing. One such individual is Colonel Theoneste Bagosora, who presided as commander of the Rwandan army during the genocide. Other suspects were tracked down all over Africa and beyond, in Belgium and the UK.

In April 2002, former chief of staff General Augustin Bizimungu was handed over by the Angolan authorities. Even more encouraging was the arrest of Colonel Tharcisse Renzaho, prefect of Kigali-ville during the genocide, the first time DRC had actually cooperated with the tribunal. Many of the Interahamwe militia leaders involved in the genocide had managed to evade justice by fighting with the Kinshasa government against forces from Rwanda and Uganda. However, with the Congolese on board in the quest for justice, there are now very few places left for the genocidaires to hide.

It is not just Congolese cooperation that is important, but also the US 'Rewards for Justice Program', which offers significant cash for information leading to the arrest of key suspects. This may have played its part in the Angolan arrest, as well as the arrests of literally dozens of other suspected criminals.

However, the prisons in Rwanda are still overflowing with genocide suspects. Prison numbers are thought to be around 120,000, and many of these prisoners are seen all over the country in their pink uniforms, helping on civil works programs.

There are three categories of prisoner: category-one suspects are those who planned and orchestrated the genocide; category-two prisoners are those who oversaw massacres and failed to prevent them when in a position to do so; and category three are those who killed or looted during the genocide. Most prisoners are category three, but evidence against them is mainly hearsay – hence the government has revived the *gacaca*, a traditional tribunal headed by village elders, to speed up the process.

However, the quest for justice in Rwanda looks set to be a long one – justice is a necessary part of reconciliation, but remains a principle rather than priority. Rwanda simply has too many cases to deal with, and too many other problems to worry about.

Daily Life

Urban Rwanda is a very sophisticated place – people follow a Mediterranean pattern of starting early before breaking off for a siesta or a long and boozy lunch. Late dinners inevitably lead into drinking and socialising that sometimes doesn't wind down until the early morning.

The rhythm of rural life is very different and follows the sun. People work long hours from dawn until dusk, but also take a break during the hottest part of the day. However,

it is a hard life for women in the countryside, who seem burdened with the lion's share of the work, while many menfolk sit around drinking and discussing.

Faith is an important rock in the lives of many Rwandan people, with Christianity firmly rooted as the dominant religion. Churches from different denominations in Rwanda were tainted by their association with the genocide in 1994, though that doesn't seem to have dampened people's devotion to the faith.

Rwanda's economy was decimated during the genocide – production ground to a halt, and foreign investors pulled out all together. However, the current government has done a commendable job of stimulating the economy, which is now fairly stable, and boasts steady growth and low inflation. Foreign investors are once again doing business in Kigali, and there are building projects springing up all over the capital.

The agriculture sector is the principle employer and export earner, contributing about half of Rwanda's GDP. Coffee is by far the largest export, accounting for about 75% of export income, while tea and pyrethrum (a natural insecticide) are also important crops. However, the vast majority of farmers live subsistence lives, growing plantain, sweet potato, beans, cassava, sorghum and maize.

Like many countries in Africa, Rwanda actively promotes universal primary education, though the education system suffered terribly during the genocide. Teachers and professors were targeted, and a large number of schools and colleges were destroyed.

Today, only about half of the current teachers hold proper credentials, though a number of international organisations are involved in programs to train teachers. Furthermore, schools are overcrowded and illiteracy runs as high as 50%.

Population

The population is moving towards 11 million, which gives Rwanda one of the highest population densities of any country in Africa. While tribal identities are very much a taboo subject in Rwanda, the population is believed to be about 85% Hutu, 15% Tutsi and 1% Twa (pygmy). The Twa are a Central Africa indigenous group that has suffered from discrimination over the generations, though is slowly gaining a political and cultural foothold.

One of Rwanda's largest 'exports' during the long years of conflict and instability was refugees, though most of these returned home in the second half of the 1990s.

SPORT

Football is Rwanda's national obsession and the Wasps, as the national team are known, are a growing force in the sport. In 2004 they qualified for the African Nations Cup for the first time.

RELIGION

About 65% of the population are Christians of various sects (Catholicism is predominant), a further 25% follow tribal religions, often with a dash of Christianity, and the remaining 10% are Muslim.

ARTS

Dance

Rwanda's most famous dancers are the *Intore* troupe – their warrior-like displays are accompanied by a trance-like drumbeat similar to that of the famous Tambourinaires (see p597) in Burundi.

Cinema

Hotel Rwanda put Rwanda on the map for movie-goers the world over. Although it was shot in South Africa, it tells the story of Hotel des Mille Collines (see p555) manager Paul Rusesabagina, played by Don Cheadle, turning this luxury hotel into a temporary haven for thousands fleeing the erupting genocide. *100 Days* and the HBO miniseries *Sometimes in April* also convey the story of the Rwandan genocide through stark yet powerful narratives.

Gorillas in the Mist is based on the autobiography of Dian Fossey (see boxed text p564), who worked with the rare mountain gorillas in Parc National des Volcans. This is essential viewing for anyone visiting the gorillas.

ENVIRONMENT

The Land

Known as the 'Land of a Thousand Hills', it is hardly surprising to find that Rwanda's endless mountains stretch into the infinite horizon. Rwanda's 26,338 sq km of land is one of the most densely populated places on earth, and almost every available piece of land is under cultivation (except the national parks). Since most of the country is mountainous, this involves a good deal of terracing, and the banded hillsides are similar to those seen in Nepal or the High Atlas of Morocco. Coffee and tea plantations take up considerable areas of land.

Wildlife

Rwanda is home to the vast spectrum of East African wildlife, as well as both classic safariscapes and verdant equatorial rainforest. For more information on the rare mountain gorillas of Parc National des Volcans, see p79.

LEAVE YOUR PLASTIC BAGS AT HOME

In an effort to preserve the natural beauty of Rwanda, the government enforces a strict ban on plastic bags throughout the country. Police are particularly vigilant at border crossings, and you will be searched and possibly fined if contraband is found. So please, help support this worthwhile initiative and leave your plastic bags at home.

National Parks & Reserves

Due to its small size and high demand for cultivatable land, Rwanda only has a small network of national parks. The most popular protected area (and the focus of most visits to Rwanda) is Parc National des Volcans (p562), a string of brooding volcanoes that provides a home for the rare mountain gorilla. Parc National de Nyungwe (p579), Rwanda's newest national park, is a tropical montane forest that is one of the richest primate destinations in the region. Parc National de l'Akagera (p585) is the third of Rwanda's parks, but is sadly a shadow of its former self due to habitat destruction during the civil war as well as post-war 'villagisation'. With that said, Akagera has staged an impressive comeback in recent years, and wildlife populations are stabilising and flourishing again.

Environmental Issues

Soil erosion, resulting from overuse of the land, is the most serious problem confronting Rwanda today. The terracing system in the country is fairly anarchic, and unlike much of Southeast Asia, the lack of coordinated water management has wiped out much of the topsoil on the slopes. This is potentially catastrophic for a country with too many people in too small a space as it points to a food-scarcity problem in the future.

Population density has also had a detrimental effect on the country's national park system, reducing Parc National des Volcans by half in 1969, and Parc National de l'Akagera by two-thirds in 1998.

When travelling through the countryside by bus, you will see children chasing the vehicle shouting '*agachupa*', which means 'little bottle'. They want your water bottle to carry water to school or to sell to recyclers – either way, this is an easy way to get involved in helping the environment.

FOOD & DRINK

In the rural areas of Rwanda, food is very similar to that in other East African countries. Popular meats include *tilapia* (Nile perch), goat, chicken and beef brochettes (kebabs), though the bulk of most meals are centred on *ugali* (maize meal), *matoke* (cooked plantains) and so-called 'Irish' potatoes (the name. In the cities however, Rwanda's francophone roots are evident in the *plat du jour* (plate of the day), which is usually excellently prepared and presented Continental-inspired cuisine.

It is not recommended that you drink the tap water in Rwanda, though bottled water is cheap and widely available. Soft drinks (sodas) and the local beers, Primus (720ml) and Mulzig (330ml and 660ml), are available everywhere, as is the local firewater, *konyagi*. Wines (both South African and European) are generally only available in upmarket restaurants and hotels, though they can be quite expensive. A pleasant, non-alcoholic alternative is the purplish juice from the tree tomato or tamarillo, which is a sweet and tasty concoction that somewhat defies explanation – give it a try!

KIGALI

pop 850,000

Spanning several ridges and valleys, the Rwandan capital of Kigali is an attractive city of lush hillsides, flowering trees, winding boulevards and bustling streets. Compared to the choking congestion of Kampala, and the sinister edge of Nairobi, Kigali is more akin to a tranquil mountain hamlet, perched on the edge of an intensively cultivated and terraced countryside.

It wasn't always like this. Kigali exists as a testament to the peace and order that has defined Rwanda's trajectory for more than a decade, though it bore the brunt of the genocide in 1994. When the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) finally captured Kigali after 100 days of systematic slaughter, dead and decaying bodies littered the streets. Dogs were shot en masse as they had developed a taste for human flesh.

In recent years, a massive amount of rehabilitation work has restored the city to its former graces, while increasing waves of foreign investment have sparked a number of

ambitious building projects. As new shopping centres and high rises slowly define the new face of Kigali, residents are looking ahead to development rather than looking back at its destruction.

While simply being in Kigali is a powerful experience for anyone who has read its name in newspapers or heard it spoken on news programs, there aren't many sights in the traditional tourist sense. However, a visit to the Kigali Memorial Centre, which documents the genocide, is simply a must for all visitors to Rwanda.

Kigali is also home to a burgeoning restaurant and café scene, which is partly being fuelled by the large number of international aid workers that have taken up residence in the city. Indeed, the rebirth of the capital has seen a surprising measure of cosmopolitanism take hold, and today Kigali is arguably one of the most pleasant cities in the whole of East Africa.

HISTORY

Kigali was founded in 1907 by German colonisers, though it did not become the capital until Rwandan independence in 1962. Although Rwandan power was traditionally centred in Huye (Butare), Kigali was chosen because of its central location. Walking the streets of Kigali today, it is hard to imagine the horrors that unfolded here during those 100 days of madness in 1994. Roadblocks, manned by Interahamwe militia, were set up at strategic points throughout the city and thousands upon thousands of Rwandans were bludgeoned or hacked to death. People swarmed to the churches in search of sanctuary, but the killers followed them there, and showed a complete lack of mercy or compassion.

While all of this horror took place for days and nights on end, the UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) stood by and watched, held back by the bureaucrats and politicians who failed to grasp the magnitude of what was unfolding. In their defence, UNAMIR was bound by a restrictive mandate that prevented them from taking preliminary action, though it has been argued that the tragedy is that more deliberate action could have saved untold lives.

After 10 Belgian peacekeepers were murdered at the start of the genocide, the Belgian government withdrew its contingent, leaving

UNAMIR to fend for itself with a minimal mandate and no muscle. There was little the 250 troops that remained could do but watch, and rescue or protect the few that they could.

Even more unbelievable is the fact that a contingent of the RPF was holed up in the parliamentary compound throughout this period, a legacy of the Arusha 'peace' process. Like the UNAMIR troops, there was little they could do to stop such widespread killing, though they did mount some spectacular rescue missions from churches and civic buildings around the city.

Throughout the massacre, the Hotel des Mille Collines (p552) became a refuge for those fleeing the violence, and thousands of people were holed up there, living in the direst of conditions. The Academy Award-winning film *Hotel Rwanda* tells the story of manager Paul Rusesabagina, who risked his life and the life of his family to selflessly help so many others.

When the RPF finally swept the genocidaires from power in early July 1994, Kigali was wrecked, much of the city's buildings were destroyed, and what little of the population remained alive were traumatised. As the Kigali Memorial Centre so aptly puts it, Rwanda was dead.

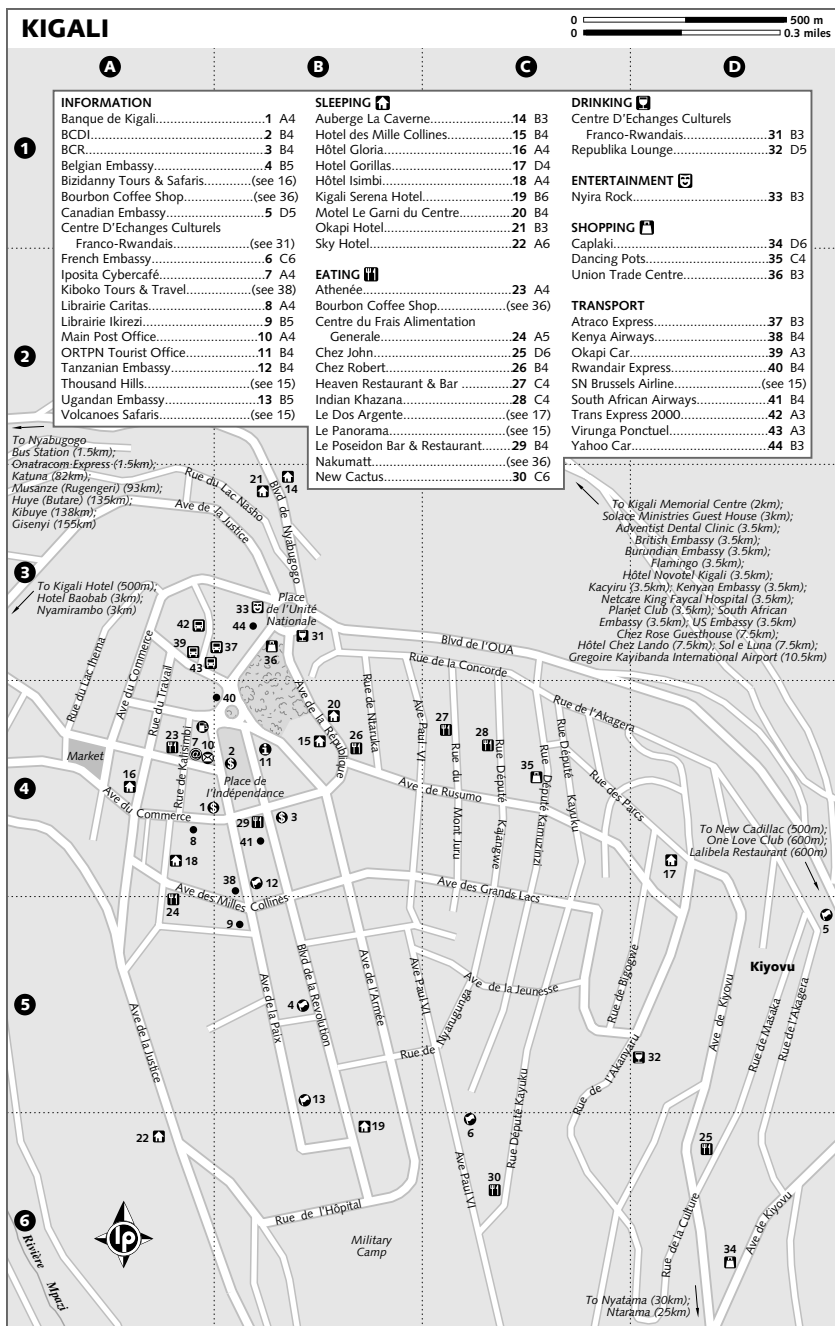
Remarkably, there are few visible signs of this carnage today. Kigali is now a dynamic and forward-looking city, the local economy is booming, investment is a buzzword, and buildings are springing up like mushrooms.

The inner damage? That's impossible to fully comprehend, though Kigali and Rwanda have recrossed the Rubicon, and deserve all of the support that they can get.

ORIENTATION

It is not that easy to come to grips with Kigali when you first arrive as it is spread across several hills and valleys. The centre fans out above Place de l'Unité Nationale, the busy commercial heartland along Ave de la Paix and the side streets heading west. Heading north down the valley from the centre of town is Blvd de Nyabugogo, which leads to the Nyabugogo bus terminal and all roads upcountry.

South of the centre along Blvd de la Revolution and surrounding streets is where many of the embassies are found, and to the southwest is the plush suburb of Kiyovu, with



several popular restaurants and upmarket hotels. Located a few kilometres across the valley east of the city centre is Kacyiru, a sophisticated suburb home to government buildings and embassies. Further out, the airport is located in the quiet district of Remera, located 10km north of the city centre and home to a number of hotels and restaurants.

It can be hard to get hold of good maps of Kigali, though ORTPN (see right) sells a number of decent foldout maps and basic city guides.

INFORMATION

Bookshops

There are a few bookshops in Kigali, selling mainly French-language publications.

Librairie Caritas (Ave du Commerce) A central bookshop for French and some English titles.

Librairie Ikirezi (☎ 571314; Ave de la Paix; 📧 9am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-12.30pm Sat & Sun)

Stocks a wide range of French- and English-language books and magazines.

Cultural Centres

Centre D'Echanges Culturels Franco-Rwandais (Ave de la République) Overlooking Place de l'Unité Nationale, this place has live music at the weekend (see p557).

Emergency

Police (☎ 083-11170) A 24-hour emergency number.

Internet Access

Internet access is widespread and very cheap in Kigali. There are plenty more places throughout the centre than those listed here, meaning no online junkie need go without their fix.

Iposita Cybercafé (per hr RFr500) Part of the post office complex.

Bourbon Coffee Shop (Union Trade Centre; free with purchase of item) The most popular café in town has a great wi-fi spot if you're travelling with your laptop (see p556).

Medical Services

Some embassies also have medical attachés who offer services through private practices.

Adventist Dental Clinic (☎ 582431) Located near the Novotel about 3.5km from the centre of town in Kacyiru district, this place is run by an international dentist based in Kigali.

Netcare King Faycal Hospital (☎ 582421) Also near the Novotel, this South African-operated hospital is the best in Kigali. Prices are high but so are standards.

Money

Before heading out into the countryside, you're going to want to stock up on cold, hard cash. At the time of writing, ATMs throughout Rwanda were not yet accepting international cards, and credit cards were only being accepted at upmarket hotels and restaurants. As a result, you're going to need to either change money, or rely on cash advances, which sadly can be a pricey affair.

For exchanges, banks are best avoided as the bureaucracy and paperwork is a pain. Street rates are generally better, but it may be safer to use one of the many foreign exchange (forex) bureaux in Kigali, mainly located around the post office.

For cash advances on your credit or ATM card, any of the following banks can sort you out, though be prepared for long lines, lots of forms and a hefty charge.

BCR (Banque Commerciale de Rwanda; Blvd de la Revolution)

Banque de Kigali (Ave du Commerce)

BCDI (Banque de Commerce, de Developement et de l'Industriel; Ave de la Paix)

Post

Main post office (Ave de la Paix; 📧 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat) Poste restante services available.

Telephone

There are quite a few telecommunications kiosks opposite the post office that are open throughout the day and into the night. There are also MTN kiosks and public payphones throughout the city.

Tourist Information

ORTPN (Office Rwandais du Tourisme et des Parcs Nationaux; ☎ 576514; ☎ /fax 576515; www.rwandatourism.com, info@rwandatourism.com, reservation@rwandatourism.com; 1 Blvd de la Revolution, BP 905; 📧 7am-5pm Mon-Fri, 7am-12pm Sat & Sun) Known locally as 'Or-ti-pen,' Rwanda's national tourism office is located right in the centre of town behind the Hotel des Mille Collines. The office stocks a number of brochures, maps and leaflets (in French and English) that detail all of Rwanda's tourist attractions. The friendly staff here is keen on answering your questions (in French and English), and promoting Rwandan tourism to the increasing streams of foreign visitors.

ORTPN is also where independent travellers can make reservations to track the mountain gorillas in Parc National des Volcans,

though it's recommended that you contact them several months in advance as permits are extremely difficult to come by during the high season. If you've arrived in Kigali without a permit, and are hoping that one will materialise in light of a last minute cancellation, the staff at ORTPN can phone around to different operators for you. While there are certainly no guarantees, you might get lucky if you're flexible and prepared to wait a few days. For more details on gorilla tracking, see p566.

This office is also a good spot to inquire about golden monkey tracking in Parc National des Volcans – for more information, see p568.

Travel Agencies

If you want some help in securing a gorilla permit, or in arranging transportation to/from any of the national parks, the following travel agencies/tour operators are a recommended first port of call. Any of the following can also help you book onward flight tickets to other countries in East Africa and beyond.

Note that there are also a couple of recommended operators in the town of Musanze (Ruhengeri) who can also help you arrange gorilla tracking permits – see p559.

Bizidanny Tours & Safaris (☎ 55102004; www.bizidanny.com; Ave du Commerce) This small start-up operator runs individually customised tours throughout the country, and can help you organise tracking permits.

International Tours & Travels (☎ 574057; Rue de la Paix) This is a reliable place for air tickets that represents a number of East African airlines, including Kenya Airways and Rwandair Express.

Kiboko Tours & Travel (☎ 501741; www.kiboko.travels.org.rw; Rue de la Paix) Another small operator that is a good starting point for securing permits and organising trips and treks throughout the country.

Thousand Hills (☎ 501151; www.thousandhills.rw; Hotel des Mille Colines, Ave de la République) One of the more well-established tour operators, Thousand Hills is an excellent choice if you want to increase your likelihood of getting your hands on a gorilla permit.

Volcanoes Safaris (☎ 502452; www.volcanoessafaris.com; Hotel des Mille Colines, Ave de la République) Probably the most professional operator in Rwanda, Volcanoes Safaris runs customised trips ranging from budget-friendly transfers to exclusive fly-ins. It owns the exclusive Virunga Lodge (p562) in Parc National Des Volcans.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

For information on Kwita Izina, the gorilla naming ceremony, see the box text on p570.

SIGHTS

Kigali Memorial Centre

Don't leave Kigali without a visit to this sombre memorial to the 1994 Rwandan genocide – for more information, see the boxed text, opposite.

Hotel des Mille Collines

The inspiration for the film *Hotel Rwanda*, this **luxury hotel** (☎ 576530; www.millecollines.net; Ave de la République) in the centre of Kigali was owned by the Belgian airline Sabena in 1994. At the time of the genocide, the hotel's European managers were evacuated, and control of the Mille Collines was given to Paul Rusesabagina, manager of the smaller Hotel des Diplomates.

As the situation in Kigali reached its boiling point, Paul opened the floodgates, and allowed fleeing Tutsis and moderate Hutu to take refuge in the hotel. His heroic story is one of self-sacrifice in the most dire of situations – he managed to bribe the Interahamwe with money and alcohol, which allowed him to provide food and water for the refugees.

Paul, his family and a few lucky survivors were eventually evacuated in a UN convoy as the Interahamwe seized the hotel. Eventually, he arrived safely behind RPF lines, and fled to Belgium with his wife, children and two adopted nieces. Today, Paul still lives in Brussels with his family, owns a small trucking company, and is an outspoken humanitarian and public hero.

A visit to the Hotel des Mille Collines is something of a must while you're in Kigali. However, it can be incredibly surreal to sip cocktails by the poolside knowing full well the tragic events that played out here just over a decade ago.

It is just business as usual here, especially given the new found international fame of the Hotel des Mille Collines. So, do your best to take a few moments to pause and reflect on the gravity of your surroundings, even if it is over a chilled lager or two.

TOURS

ORTPN (p551) offers a Kigali city tour (US\$20, three hours) departing at 8am or 2pm daily. The tour includes the Kigali Memorial Centre, as well as a few other prominent buildings around town. It's not amazing value given the memorial currently has

KIGALI MEMORIAL CENTRE

More than a memorial for Kigali, more than a memorial for Rwanda and its tragedy, this is a memorial for all of us, marking the Rwandan genocide and many more around the world that never should have come to pass. The **Kigali Memorial Centre** (www.kigalimemorialcentre.org; admission free, donations welcome, ☎ 10am-5pm, closed public holidays) is a must for all visitors to Rwanda wanting to learn more about how it was that the world watched as a genocide unfolded in this tiny, landlocked country.

Downstairs is dedicated to the Rwandan genocide; the informative tour includes background on the divisive colonial experience in Rwanda and the steady build-up to the genocide. Exhibits are professionally presented and include short video clips in French and English. As the visit progresses, it becomes steadily more powerful, as you are confronted with the crimes that took place here.

The sections on the cold and calculated planning of the genocide and its bloody execution are particularly disturbing, and include moving video testimony from survivors. The story continues with sections on the refugee crisis in the aftermath of the genocide and the search for justice through the international tribunal in Arusha as well as the local *gacaca* courts (traditional tribunals headed by village elders).

Finally, you are confronted with a room full of photographs of Rwandan victims of the genocide. The effect is very similar to Tuol Sleng, the Khmer Rouge prison in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. You feel yourself suffocating under the weight of sadness and despair, the wasted lives and loves of the nameless people surrounding you.

Upstairs is a moving section dedicated to informing visitors about other genocides that have taken place around the world to set Rwanda's nightmare in a historical context. Armenians, Jews, Cambodians, all have been victims of the mass slaughter we now know as genocide.

There is also a section on Rwandan children who fell victim to the killers' machetes. Young and innocent, if you have remained impassionate until this point, the horror of it all catches up with you here. Life-size photos are accompanied by intimate details about their favourite toys, their last words and the manner in which they were killed.

Why did Rwanda descend into 100 days of madness? The Kigali Memorial Centre explains it as best it can, but no one can answer the fundamental question of what it takes to turn man into beast. However, the centre is a fitting memorial to the 1994 genocide, especially since the memorial gardens here hold the remains of more than 250,000 victims.

The Kigali Memorial Centre was set up with assistance from the **Aegis Trust** (www.aegistrust.org), which was established in 2000 at the Holocaust Centre in the UK. The organisation, which is dedicated to understanding and preventing genocide, is involved in a number of activities including academic research, policy advocacy, education, public awareness and humanitarian support for victims of genocide.

The Kigali Memorial Centre is located in the northern Kisozi district of the capital, which is a short taxi ride from the centre (2000 RFr). You can also come here as part of an organised tour, which can be arranged through ORTPN (see Tours opposite).

no entry charge, but the guides are very knowledgeable, and can give you a local's perspective on the capital.

KIGALI FOR CHILDREN

This definitely isn't the world's most exciting city for children. The best bet if you're travelling with the little ones is to check into a hotel with a swimming pool and take it from there. Otherwise, head out to one of the national parks or to Gisenyi (p572) for some 'beach' time on Lake Kivu.

SLEEPING

In the years since the genocide, Kigali has played host to legions of international aid workers, diplomats, bureaucrats, investors etc, all of whom have played their own small part in driving up the city's hotel prices. While there is a wide range of accommodation spread out across the town, the vast majority is decidedly upmarket. Of course, there are a few good spots at the budget end of the spectrum, though this is one city where it might be worth splashing out with a bit of extra cash.

Finding a hotel is not a great problem, but advance reservations at more expensive places are recommended. Accommodation is spread across town, but those without their own transport should head for the city centre. Note that prices are quoted in US dollars, although hotels will accept just about any form of hard cash that you have on you.

Budget

Hôtel Gloria (☎ 571957; cnr Rue du Travail & Ave du Commerce; s/d from US\$10/15) Possibly the longest running budget digs in town, Hôtel Gloria's location is right in the heart of Kigali, though it doesn't appear to have benefited from any of the renovation plans that are transforming the city centre. Still, if you can deal with the dingy rooms and the cold-water showers, it's definitely cheap.

Kigali Hotel (☎ 571384; s/d from US\$10/15) Another good hotel on the bang-for-your-buck basis, the Kigali has large rooms that are thoroughly sanitised with en suite bathrooms and the occasional blast of hot water. However, the big drawback is that it is quite a long way from the action, tucked away behind the mosque on the road to Nyamirambo. Oh, and that mosque – don't forget the early morning wake-up calls.

Auberge La Caverne (☎ 574549; Blvd de Nyabugogo; s/d from US\$10/20) A significant cut above the rough and ready cheapies at this end of the scale, this little auberge is home to just 15 rooms of varying sizes and shapes. You can keep things simple by shoestringing it in the smaller rooms, or paying a bit extra for larger suites with satellite TV and raised bathtubs (yes, there's hot water).

ourpick One Love Club (☎ 575412; www.oneloveproject.org; Ave des Poids Lourds; camping US\$10, r US\$20-30; 📺) 'Let's get together and feel alright, altogether now...' If it's the spirit of peace and harmony you are after, then this little retreat is the place for you. Since 1997, profits from this small guesthouse have been ploughed back into a local nongovernmental organisation (NGO) to help the disabled community in Rwanda. You can support this noble cause, which has so far supplied artificial limbs to more than 5000 Rwandans at no cost, by either pitching a tent in their shady campsite or bedding down in their simple but cosy en suite rooms. Even if you're not staying here, make a point of stopping by for dinner as the lush gardens

of the One Love Club are also home to the Lalibela Restaurant (p556), the best spot in the city for spongy *injera* (sourdough bread) and hearty *wats* (stews).

Solace Ministries Guest House (☎ 588005; www.solacem.org/solace_guest_house.htm; Kacyiru; r per person with meals US\$25) Located in the suburb of Kacyiru, Solace Ministries is dedicated to providing antiretroviral drugs to women who were raped by the Interahamwe during the 1994 genocide. Funding for this vitally important project is partially obtained by opening up the doors of the church to foreign tourists. En suite rooms are bright, airy and have proper bathtubs, though the highlight is the traditional Rwandan cooking provided with gusto to hungry guests. Even if you're not a religious person, the mission of Solace Ministries is certainly worth supporting.

Midrange

Chez Rose Guesthouse (☎ 085-05545; s/d US\$30/34) Located in the suburb of Remera, which is convenient to the airport if you have an early morning flight, this bucolic little guesthouse offers a nice respite from the city centre. The management is friendly, the rooms are more than adequate and the price is right, although it is a bit far out if you don't have your own car.

Hôtel Isimbi (☎ 575109; www.hotelisimbi.co.rw; Rue de Kalisimbi; s/d from US\$30/36) The most central of all the midrange hotels, Isimbi is a good option for those who don't fancy walking up and down Kigali's endless hills. While the functional rooms here are somewhat lacking in atmosphere, it's a comfortable enough place that attracts a lot of local business travellers.

Sky Hotel (☎ 516693; Ave de la Justice; s/d from US\$30/36) Perched on the edge of the road to Nyamirambo, the inspiration for this hotel's name probably comes from the first-class views of the valley below. Rooms are smart and well equipped, and there is a great little terrace bar below the hotel with big breezes blowing down from the hills.

Okapi Hotel (☎ 576765; www.okapi.co.rw; Blvd de Nyabugogo; s/d from US\$35/46; 📺) A well established midrange hotel that attracts a loyal following, the Okapi benefits from a decent location that's within easy walking distance of the city centre. The rooms themselves benefit from modern amenities, so you can watch satellite TV and take a steaming hot bath, or just relax on the balcony and watch the city go by. There

is also a reliable on-site internet café as well as an excellent restaurant that serves a variety of African and international cuisine.

Hôtel Chez Lando (☎ 584328; www.hotelchezlando.com; s/d from US\$60/70) A long-standing Kigali institution located out in the suburb of Remera, the rooms at Chez Lando are single-storey units set around a lush garden. While it's a long way out of town, the peace and quiet on offer here are big draws, assuming you either have your own wheels or don't mind relying on taxis.

ourpick Hotel Gorillas (☎ 501717; www.hotelgorillas.com; Rue des Parcs; standard s/d US\$85/105, deluxe s/d US\$95/115; 📺) It's a bit more expensive than other midrange hotels, but the Hotel Gorillas is arguably one of the best options in town. A slick little hotel in the upmarket Kiyovu area of the city, this place is winning over a lot of customers thanks to its spacious rooms with a touch of decorative flair. The highlight of the property is Le Dos Argente (p556) or the Silverback Restaurant, which is an open-air bistro in the French tradition that has an eclectic offering of Rwandan and Continental classics. If you're travelling with your laptop, there is also a strong wireless signal here, and plenty of al fresco seating where you can surf the web while sipping an ice cold Primus.

Top End

Motel Le Garni du Centre (☎ 572654; garni@rwanda1.com; Ave de la République; s/d incl breakfast US\$125/140; 📺) Kigali's first and only boutique hotel, this intimate and atmospheric little auberge is tucked away on a side road below Hotel des Mille Collines. By far the smallest upmarket property in town, Le Garni du Centre boasts individually decorated rooms that are built around an inviting swimming pool – if you've been traipsing up and down Kigali's hills, be kind to your feet and reward them with a relaxing soak.

ourpick Hotel des Mille Collines (☎ 576530; www.millecollines.net; Ave de la République; s/d US\$135/155; 📺 📺) Welcome to the *Hotel Rwanda*. With the international success of the movie, the 'Hotel of a Thousand Hills' looks set to see a surge in bookings, which is probably why it was in the midst of a major renovation at the time of research. The hotel used in the movie was actually down in South Africa, though the original hotel where horror and hope collided was right here. Of course, the actual

property is a bit more of a cement and glass construction than the colonial compound that appeared in the film, though the exceedingly elegant and spacious rooms are four-star quality all the way. Even if you're not staying here, stop by for a poolside drink – for more information, see p552.

Hôtel Novotel Kigali (☎ 585816; www.accorhotels.com/accorhotels/fichehotel/gb/nov/3410/fiche_hotel.shtml; s/d US\$135/185; 📺 📺 📺) Long considered the best in town, the Novotel has now lost that title to the Kigali Serena, though this popular French-owned hotel is still a refined and sophisticated spot. It's a long way out in the suburb of Kacyiru, but francophones will still appreciate this luxurious offering from the Accor family, with both premium business amenities and resort-quality bars and restaurants.

Kigali Serena Hotel (☎ 597100; www.serenahotels.com/rwanda/kigali/home.asp; Blvd de la Revolution; s/d from US\$275/300; 📺 📺 📺) The capital's first and currently only five-star hotel, the Kigali Serena is certainly the smartest address in town. Formerly the Diplomates, and later the Intercontinental, the Kigali Serena was born after the Aga Khan Foundation pumped some serious style (and money) into this property in a bid to reel in Kigali's high-flying diplomats and businessmen. The result is the swishest spot in all of Rwanda, although you're going to need to peel some serious bills out of your bank roll if you want to bed down with the country's top movers and shakers.

EATING

The dining scene in Kigali is getting increasingly more sophisticated with each passing year, especially since the city's resident expats have been known to spend serious sums of cash in search of gourmet cuisine. While Rwanda's cosmopolitan capital has always been the country's best spot for innovative African dishes alongside European-inspired creations, Kigali now boasts a broad palette of international offerings.

Much like its inflated hotel scene, eating out in Kigali is not a cheap experience, though you can generally expect a higher standard here than in other East African capitals. Furthermore, the country's francophone roots shine through in its rich cuisine, which means that meals in Rwanda are best enjoyed at a leisurely pace in the company of good friends with lots and lots of wine to go around. Bon appétit!

Budget

Le Poseidon Bar & Restaurant (Ave de la République; mains RFr1500-3000) This is Kigali's very own fast food spot, with a lively bar and local restaurant offering sandwiches, burgers, pizzas and pastas. It draws a healthy work crowd at lunchtime, and can fill up with stragglers leaving the office on Fridays.

ourpick Bourbon Coffee Shop (☎ 505307; Union Trade Centre; coffee & pastry RFr1500-3000; ☑) While Rwanda produces some of the finest coffee beans in the world, the vast majority are marked for export, leaving behind only instant coffee. However, if you don't like your morning blend served in a packet, head to this popular spot where locals and expats alike queue up for the real stuff. Frothy cappuccinos and potent espressos are made all the better by the varied selection of continental pastries. And here's the best part – you get an hour of free wi-fi access with your purchase, so bring along your laptop if you need a quick internet fix.

Sole Luna (☎ 583062; near Kisementi crossroads; pizzas RFr2000-3500) Out in the 'burbs near Hotel Chez Lando, locals swear that this Italian pizzeria is the best around. Rwanda may be a long way from the boot shaped peninsula, but we agree – fresh ingredients inevitably create awesome pizza.

Chez John (Rue de Masaka; meals RFr2000-4000) A popular local haunt with more than its fair share of foreign patrons, Chez John serves up true Rwandan standards, namely meat and maize. The surroundings may have gone upmarket in light of its recent success, but this is still authentic country-style cooking at its finest.

Midrange

Lalibela Restaurant (☎ 575412; Ave des Poids Lourds; mains RFr3000-4000) Kigali's premiere Ethiopian restaurant is set in the grounds of the One Love Club (p554), so you can dine comfortably knowing that part of the proceeds of your meal are going to charity. It has a laid-back atmosphere in keeping with the Rasta owner, and serves big portions of spicy chicken and the like on *injera*. It also rocks on as a bar later in the evening.

Hotel Baobab (☎ 575633; dishes RFr3000-5000) It is worth venturing into the wilds of Nyamirambo to this al fresco restaurant, which offers diners a welcome measure of intimacy by serving meals in private pavilions set in a lush garden.

The menu is an extensive list of African and continental favourites, ranging from grilled tilapia straight from the Great Lakes or an aged cut of beef in a French-reduction sauce.

New Cactus (☎ 572572; Rue Député Kayuku; mains RFr3000-5000) Outrageously popular with expats and well-to-do Rwandans alike, the New Cactus is set on a commanding ridge up in Kiyovu where you can soak up the sparkling lights of Kigali by night. Boasting a broad menu of French favourites, gourmet pizzas, rich fondues and a well-rounded wine list, you should spend a bit liberally here if you really want to live well.

Indian Khazana (Rue Député Kajangwe; plates RFr3500-5000) Kampala's most celebrated Indian restaurant has come south to Kigali; Khana Khazana has been spicing up people's lives for years in the Ugandan capital and now Rwanda can enjoy the subtle flavours of the subcontinent. One of the hottest places in town, Khazana is the perfect antidote to too many days on the road with nothing more than *ugali* and *nyama choma* (barbecued meat) to choose from.

Flamingo (☎ 586589; 6th fl, Telecom House, Blvd de l'Umuganda; mains RFr3500-5000) Something of a Kigali institution, the Flamingo has moved into an anonymous office block in Kacyiru, though it's still hands down the best Chinese in the country. The sizzling platters are quite a sight, and there is a serious selection for vegetarians, though most diners are content to tuck into hearty portions of stir-fried noodles.

Heaven Restaurant & Bar (☎ 500234; Rue Du Mont Juru; mains RFr3500-5000) A relative newcomer on the burgeoning Kigali restaurant scene, Heaven is highlighted by the handcrafted wooden tables and chairs produced by local artisans. The menu itself is akin to a relaxed bistro offering fine dining, as evident by the eclectic menu drawing from a variety of international influences.

Top End

Chez Robert (☎ 501305; Ave de la République; meals RFr5000-7000) Formerly home to the extravagant Aux Caprices du Palais, Chez Robert now plays host to a Brussels exile, and offers a sophisticated menu of French and Belgian classics. Many of the dishes feature luxury ingredients such as fine European cheeses and wines; but it's the quality of the local produce that makes the dishes here truly shine.

Le Dos Argente (☎ 501717; Hotel Gorillas, Rue des Parcs; mains RFr5000-10,000) Also known as the Silverback

Restaurant, this is one of the best restaurants in Kigali, set in an open-air garden at the Hotel Gorillas and staffed by an extremely attentive wait staff. The accent here is most definitely French – *foie gras*, *duck à l'orange* and even rabbit and frogs legs are available for the discerning diner, as is an impressive wine list (with equally impressive prices!).

Le Panorama (☎ 576530; www.millecollines.net; Hotel des Mille Collines, Ave de la République; mains RFr5000-10,000) Proudly perched at the top floor of the Hotel des Mille Collines, Kigali's most famous restaurant attracts its fair share of international scenesters, who flock here for formal banquets with panoramic views. Although dining here can be a decidedly stuffy experience, the food is of very high quality, and the views really do make it worth your while.

Self-Catering

Athenée (Rue de Kalisimbi) Travellers who want to do a spot of self-catering or who are planning some time in Parc National Nyungwe or Parc National de l'Akagera will find a small selection of things here.

Centre du Frais Alimentation Generale (Ave des Mille Collines) This is the spot for far-flung imports, although you'll do just as well checking out the bakery on the premises.

Nakumatt (Union Trade Centre, Place de l'Unité Nationale) By far the best option for self-caterers, this huge supermarket in the Union Trade Centre pretty much has everything you'll need.

DRINKING & ENTERTAINMENT

The good folk of Kigali take their drinking and partying pretty seriously, and there are a number of good bars around town, some of which turn into clubs as the night wears on. While you certainly don't need to dress to impress, Rwandans are mindful of appearances, especially in increasingly cosmopolitan Kigali. Besides, there's certainly no harm in donning some nice threads from time to time.

The swimming pool at the Hotel des Mille Collines (see p552) serves as the city's most popular daytime bar at weekends with expats coming here to relax by the water. There is a happy hour from 5pm to 7pm every day. Hotel Chez Lando (p555) is another popular hotel bar that draws a local crowd almost every night, whether for drinking, dining or dancing – it also has DJs on the weekends.

Centre D'Echanges Culturels Franco-Rwandais (Ave de la République; admission from RFr2000, drinks

RFr500-1000) On Friday and Saturday, the Centre D'Echanges Culturels Franco-Rwandais plays host to leading local bands. The music is an eclectic mix of Rwandan, reggae and international covers, and after a few beers everyone finds their rhythm.

our pick New Cadillac (admission from RFr2500, drinks from RFr1500; ☎ Wed-Sun) This long-running club is just holding off all-comers to remain the most popular place in town. Located in the Kimikure district not far from the centre of Kigali, this is a large, partly open-air venue that plays a mixture of East African pop, Congolese *soukous* (dance music) and Western hits most nights. It doesn't really pick up until after midnight, but once it does, it really rocks, and usually well into the early morning.

Nyira Rock (Ave du Commerce; admission from RFr1000, drinks from RFr500) This local nightclub in the city centre boasts DJs, cheap beers and plenty of action towards the weekend. It is one place in Kigali where you can expect to find something of a small gay and lesbian scene, though, as always in East Africa, use discretion.

Planet Club (Kigali Business Centre, Ave du Lac Muhazi; admission from RFr3500, drinks from RFr2000) This trendy nightclub is often called KBC by locals due to its location in the Kigali Business Centre, well out of the city centre. This is one weekend spot where you really need to pay to play, though you'll certainly be glad you did.

Republika Lounge (Rue de l'Akanyaru; drinks RFr1000-2500) Located in the fancy Kiyovu area of town, Republika is definitely the place to be in Kigali. Lush furnishings, a well-stocked bar and a small menu for the midnight munchies keep the crowds happy.

SHOPPING

Rwanda produces some attractive handicrafts, but the lack of tourists in the country has kept development of souvenir shops to a minimum. Look for basketry, batik, drums, woodcarvings and the famous cow-dung art of symmetrical symbols. There are also a lot of Congolese handicrafts, including the ever-popular wooden masks.

Kigali isn't exactly the shopping capital of Africa, but there are a few good places to have a sniff around. There are some good craft shops selling locally produced carvings, cards and paintings, mostly located near the main post office in the centre of town.

Caplaki (Ave de Kiyovu) Sellers are organised in fixed stalls and popular items include a range of carvings and masks from across the border in DRC. Sellers claim many items are 'antiques' and price their goods accordingly; the reality is most are modern replicas and you should bargain prices down to something more sensible.

Dancing Pots (Rue Député Kamuzinzi) This is an admirable fair trade project established to assist the Batwa pygmies. The Forest Peoples' Project has been training potters to produce terracotta pieces, which can be bought here at prices that are fair to both the artisan and the customer.

Union Trade Centre (Place de l'Unité Nationale) A sparkling new shopping centre at the heart of Kigali, the Union Centre is home to a large Nakumatt shopping centre as well as a few small shops, eateries and travel agents.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

For contact details of the international airlines flying in and out of Gregoire Kayibanda International Airport, see p592. **Rwandair Express** (☎ 503687; www.rwandair.com; Ave de la Paix) is the national airline and is planning domestic flights to Gisenyi.

Bus & Minibus

Several bus companies operate services to major towns, which are less crowded and safer than local minibuses. Okapi Car runs to Huye (Butare), Gisenyi, Kibuye and Musanze (Ruhengeri); Atraco Express to Huye (Butare), Musanze (Ruhengeri) and Gisenyi, including a through service to Goma; Trans Express 2000 to Huye (Butare); and Virunga Ponctuel to Musanze (Ruhengeri). See the individual town entries for more details on journey times and road conditions.

All buses depart from company bus offices in the city centre. Onatraco Express have larger 45-seat buses, which could be considered safer, and these run to Musanze (Ruhengeri) and Gisenyi, plus Huye (Butare) and Cyangugu. These services depart from the Nyabugogo bus station.

Local minibuses depart from the Nyabugogo bus terminal for towns all around Rwanda, including Huye (Butare; RFr1400, two hours), Katuna (RFr1700, 1½ hours), Kibuye (RFr1500), Musanze (Ruhengeri; RFr1300, two hours) and Gisenyi (RFr1800,

four hours). These minibuses leave when full throughout the day, except at weekends when they tend to dry up after 3pm. Just turn up and tell someone where you're going. See the respective town entries for further details.

Nyabugogo is about 2km north of the city centre in the valley and minibuses (RFr300) are available from the city centre, although there is no longer a local bus station in the centre.

GETTING AROUND To/From the Airport

Gregoire Kayibanda International Airport is at Kanombe, 10km east of the city centre. A taxi costs about RFr7500, but a direct minibus from the city centre is cheaper (RFr400).

Minibus

There is no longer a local bus station in the city centre, so minibuses cruise the streets looking for passengers. All advertise their destination in the front window and run to districts throughout the city. Costs are very cheap, from RFr100 to RFr300.

Taxi

There are no metered taxis, but a fare within the city centre costs, on average, RFr1500 to RFr2000, double that out to the suburbs or later at night.

Taxi-Motor

These small Japanese trail bikes can be a swift way to get around Kigali, although it can be quite scary travelling out to the suburbs as the drivers really hit the throttle. Short hops are just RFr200 to RFr500, while trips out to the suburbs cost RFr700 to RFr1000.

AROUND KIGALI

NYAMATA & NTARAMA GENOCIDE MEMORIALS

During the genocide, victims fled to churches seeking refuge, only to find that some of the clergy was providing information to the Interahamwe. As a result of their lack of compassion, some of the most horrific massacres took place inside the holy sanctums of churches throughout Rwanda.

Two of the most powerful genocide memorials are churches located on the outskirts of Kigali. **Nyatama**, about 30km south

of Kigali, is a deeply disturbing memorial where skulls and bones of the many victims are on display. While the visual remains of the deceased are a visceral sight, their inclusion here is to provide firm evidence to would-be genocide deniers.

The church at **Ntarama**, about 25km south of Kigali, is more understated but no less powerful. The church has not been touched since the bodies were removed more than a decade ago, and there are many bits of clothing scraps still on the floor. Both of these memorials can be visited on a day trip, although you will need to either have your own transport or arrange for a taxi to bring you there and back.

NORTHWESTERN RWANDA

A formidable natural border between Rwanda, Uganda and DRC, the Virunga volcanoes are where Rwanda really earns its nickname as the Land of a Thousand Hills. Home to their share of the last mountain gorillas on the planet, the Rwandan Virungas are protected by Parc National de Volcans, the undisputed highlight of the country. The region is also home to the tranquil town of Gisenyi on the sandy shores of Lake Kivu, which is Rwanda's top spot for a 'beach' holiday.

MUSANZE (RUHENGERRI)

For most travellers, Musanze (Ruhengeri) is the preferred staging post on their way to the magnificent Parc National des Volcans (p562), one of the best places in East Africa to track the rare mountain gorilla. Since permit holders are required to check in at the park headquarters in nearby Kinigi at 7am on the day of tracking, staying in Musanze is a much safer option than leaving from Kigali at the crack of dawn.

While you certainly need to check out of your hotel early enough to reach the national park, consider coming back to town for another night after tracking the gorillas. Musanze is a pleasant enough town to explore on foot, it's also situated near a number of interesting natural sights. Musanze Cave, just 2km outside the town centre, is presently being developed as a tourist attraction, while the nearby lakes of Ruhondo and Burera are ripe for independent exploration.

What's in a name? Good question. In 2006, the name of the town was changed from Ruhengeri to Musanze following an administrative reorganisation of Rwanda's 12 former provinces. Since prior boundaries were drawn along tribal divisions, the country was reorganised into more neutral divisions: North, South, East, West and Kigali. At the time of research, both names were still being used, though most Rwandans were promoting the new name of Musanze.

Orientation

Musanze is a somewhat small and relatively insignificant town, although the impressive views make up for it, with the mighty Virunga volcanoes – Karisimbi, Bisoke (Visoke), Sabinyo, Gahinga (Mgahinga) and Muhabura (Muhavura) – looming to the north and west.

Forget any ideas about climbing the hill (Nyamagumba) near the post office – it's a military area and access is prohibited.

Information

INTERNET

Karibu Internet & Giftshop (behind Rue Commerce; per hr Rfr500)

MONEY

Banks in Musanze aren't that useful as they can only change cash and cannot be relied upon to deal with travellers cheques or credit cards. With that said, be sure to stock up on plenty of cash before departing from Kigali.

Banque de Kigali (Ave de 5 Juillet)

BCDI (Ave de la Nutrition) Represents Moneygram.

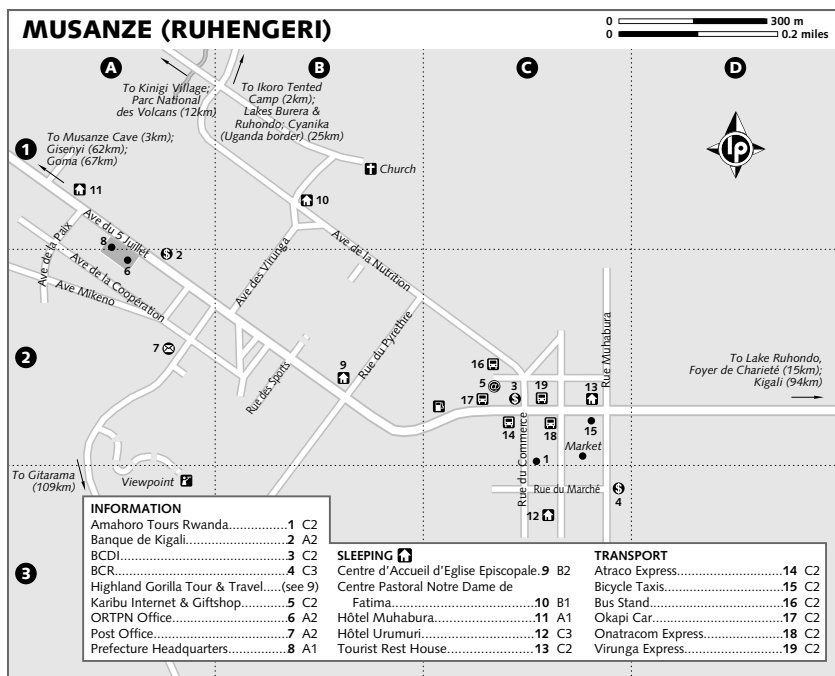
BCR (Rue Muhabura) Represents Western Union.

POST

Post office (☎ 8am-noon & 2-4pm Mon-Fri) Offers basic telephone and postal services.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Located in the prefecture headquarters, the **Office Rwandais du Tourisme et des Parcs Nationaux (Rwandan Tourism Board)** (ORTPN; www.rwandatourism.com, info@rwandatourism.com, reservation@rwandatourism.com; Ave du 5 Juillet) is the smaller sister of the main 'Or-ti-pen' office in Kigali. If you already have a gorilla permit, there is little to no reason to stop by here as permit holders are required to check in at 7am on the scheduled day of their tracking at the nearby park headquarters in Kinigi.



If you don't have a gorilla permit, in theory you can stop by here a few days before you want to go tracking in the hopes of trying to snatch up an available permit. However, this is becoming less and less likely due to the soaring popularity of gorilla tracking in Rwanda. With that said, it is also much easier to deal with the ORTPN office (p551) in Kigali, or with any of the travel agencies listed in the Kigali section (see p552) or below.

For further details on gorilla tracking, see p566.

If you're planning on exploring the nearby Musanze Cave (see right), this office is the best place to arrange for the necessary permits and guides. It's also a good spot to inquire about golden monkey tracking in Parc National des Volcans – for more information, see p566.

TRAVEL AGENCIES

If you want some help in securing a gorilla permit, or in arranging transportation to/from any of the national parks, the following travel agencies/tour operators are recommended. Note that there are also quite a number

of recommended operators in Kigali – for more information, see p552.

Amahoro Tours Rwanda (☎ 8687448; www.amahoro-tours.com; Rue de Commerce) A small, locally run operator that gets rave reviews from readers, Amahoro can help you arrange permits as well as cultural activities and homestays in the surrounding area.

Highland Gorilla Tour & Travel (☎ 8414488; www.shyirsdiocese.or.rw; Ave du 5 Juillet) Another small but reliable operator, this agency is run by the local diocese.

Festivals & Events

For information on Kwita Izina, the gorilla naming ceremony, see the boxed text, p570.

Sights & Activities

MUSANZE CAVE

Following several internationally funded speleological projects, this massive **cave complex** (permit US\$30) is now open to visitors for the first time in its history. Located just 2km from the town centre, the Musanze Cave lies in a volcanic region where different lava flows joined to create the Albertine Rift Valley.

The cave itself has no less than 31 entrances, and is comprised largely of lava ba-

saltic layers from the Bisoke and Sabyinyo volcanoes. Bat roosts are a significant feature of Musanze Cave, as are huge roof collapses that create vast arrays of coloured light shafts.

During the 1994 Rwandan genocide, Musanze Cave was the sight of a bloody massacre, and today local people often view the complex as a tomb. Please keep this issue in mind when you're exploring the area and do not engage in any behaviour that might be deemed disrespectful.

As **spelunking** can be a high-risk activity, you need to get permission from ORTPN in Musanze before exploring the cave. You're also going to want to hire a local guide as the complex is massive, and there is potential for plenty to go wrong if you don't know where you're going.

Tourism at the site is still in its infancy, so there is potential here to chart some new territory. The complex is rumoured to be more than 2km long, and the cathedral-like main entrance and adjacent lava bridge near the town centre certainly provide evidence to the wonders that lie within.

To reach the main entrance, follow Ave du 5 Juillet for 2km from the centre of town towards Gisenyi. Look for a small sign that marks the access road, which winds past a school and a football field to the main entrance.

LAKES RUHONDO & BURERA

The outskirts of Musanze are home to two large lakes, which are dotted with small villages and accessed via a network of undeveloped dirt roads. While Ruhondo and Burera are not officially set up for tourism, you can easily have a do-it-yourself adventure here, especially if you can arrange boat transport with the local fishermen.

The scenery here is breathtaking as the shores of the lakes are heavily terraced and cultivated with crops, and the Virunga volcanoes loom ominously in the distance. Even if you don't take a boat trip on the lakes, self-drivers will enjoy exploring the area, stopping to take advantage of potential photo ops.

The shores of Lake Ruhondo are also home to two accommodation options, either of which provide a good alternative to staying in Musanze. Note that public transportation in this area is very limited, so it's best to have your own wheels.

Sleeping

As the main jumping off point for Parc National des Volcans (p562), there are quite a number of accommodation options in the centre of Musanze. If you want more natural surroundings however, you can also check out the couple of spots on the nearby shores of Lakes Ruhondo and Burera.

There are further options in and around the village of Kinigi, which is located on the edge of Parc National des Volcans – see p571 for more details.

TOWN CENTRE

Hotel Urumuri (☎ 546820; r RfR3500) For those wanting a bathroom on tap, this local hotel is the cheapest deal in town. Tucked away on a side street off Rue du Marché, it is a friendly enough spot assuming you're not too fussy about the lack of hot water and the somewhat dilapidated rooms.

Tourist Rest House (☎ 546635; Rue Muhabura; s/tw RfR4000/6000) Part of the same group as the popular Skyblue hotels in Uganda, this is a well-run little establishment for budget travellers. Rooms are on the smallish side, but they're good value considering their relative cleanliness and the somewhat reliable hot water.

Centre d'Accueil d'Eglise Episcopale (☎ 546857; cnr Rue du Pyrethre & Ave du 5 Juillet; r RfR5000-40,000) This church-run establishment has moved into the hotel stakes in recent years, and now offers the widest range of rooms in town. Cheap rooms are in a small block with shared bathrooms, but as you start spending more, facilities improve, including, at the top of the scale, satellite TV and palatial bathtubs.

Centre Pastoral Notre Dame de Fatima (☎ 546780; Ave des Virungas; s/d from RfR10,000/20,000, apt RfR30,000; ☑) An excellent midrange option, this small guesthouse is also affiliated with a local Christian church. Modern rooms as well as one family-sized apartment are simple yet functional, and there is an on site bar-restaurant as well as a small internet café for guests.

Hotel Muhabura (☎ 546296; Ave du 5 Juillet; r/apt RfR15000/20,000; ☑) The town's leading hotel, the Muhabura offers spacious rooms that catch plenty a mountain breeze, which is fine as you can always warm up with a steamy shower in the en suite bathrooms. There are also several apartments here that are verging on mini-suites, and definitely worth the extra cash. Even if you're not staying here, stop by for dinner as the hotel arguably has the best restaurant in town.

Ikoro Tented Camp (☎ 671572; www.elegantafrika.com; Cyanika Rd; luxury tent US\$150, personal tent US\$7 per person) This ecologically-sensitive tented camp was still a work in progress at the time of research, though there is a good chance it will be open for business during the life of this book. Owned by a British pair that fell in love with this corner of Rwanda, Ikoro is being constructed entirely of local materials, and is employing a large number of workers from the surrounding towns. Stop by, and send us an update to let us know how things are progressing!

Amahoro Tours can arrange homestays in the local community – for more information, see p560.

LAKES RUHONDO & BURERA

Foyer de Charité (☎ 547024; s/d from RFr7000/10,000) Established as a Christian retreat in the 1960s, this secluded guesthouse is scenically located on the shores of Lake Ruhondo, just outside the village of Kadahero. While you will most likely need your own wheels to get out here, this is a good option if you want a quiet base near the lakes. Note that it's probably best to phone ahead as the Foyer is closed occasionally for religious events.

Virunga Lodge (☎ 502452; www.volcanoessafaris.com; s/d from US\$465/700) One of the most stunningly situated camps in the region, the Virunga Lodge is nestled on a ridge above Lake Burera, offers incredible views across to the Virunga volcanoes, and is widely regarded as the finest lodge in all of Rwanda; rates include all meals and activities. Accommodation is in individual stone chalets that are decorated with local crafts and hardwood furnishings, though this place is definitely more about eco-atmosphere than opulent luxury. There is a striking bar and restaurant that specialises in organic foods, and is highlighted by a 360-degree view of the lakes and volcanoes beyond.

Eating & Drinking

Dining and drinking options are pretty limited in town given the number of foreigners passing through these days, though there are a handful of small local spots scattered around town.

The best restaurant in Musanze is at the Hotel Muhabura (p561), which has a continental menu of brochettes, steaks, tilapia and some well-dressed salads. Meals run from

RFr2500 to RFr5000, and the restaurant is usually buzzing with travellers heading to/from the gorillas.

Hotel Urumuri has an outdoor courtyard restaurant with a good value menu, including brochettes, pastas and salads. Most meals run in the RFr1500 to RFr2500 and the place draws in a lot of locals in search of a hot dinner and a cold beer.

Although Musanze is generally a very quiet place in the evenings, the hotel bars are decent places to interact with other travellers. Big European football games are also screened here on weekends, which predictably draw a big crowd.

Getting There & Away

Numerous bus companies offer scheduled hourly services between Musanze and Kigali, including **Okapi Car** (Ave du 5 Juillet), **Virunga Express** (Ave du 5 Juillet) and **Atraco Express** (Ave du 5 Juillet), all charging around RFr1500. These buses are less crowded than minibuses. **Onatracom Express** (Ave du 5 Juillet) has three large buses per day passing through, connecting Kigali and Gisenyi – tickets are available at the petrol station.

There are normal minibuses from Musanze to Kigali (RFr1300, two hours), on a breathtaking mountain road, as well as to Cyanika (RFr500, 45 minutes), on the Rwanda-Uganda border, and to Gisenyi (RFr1000, 1½ hours).

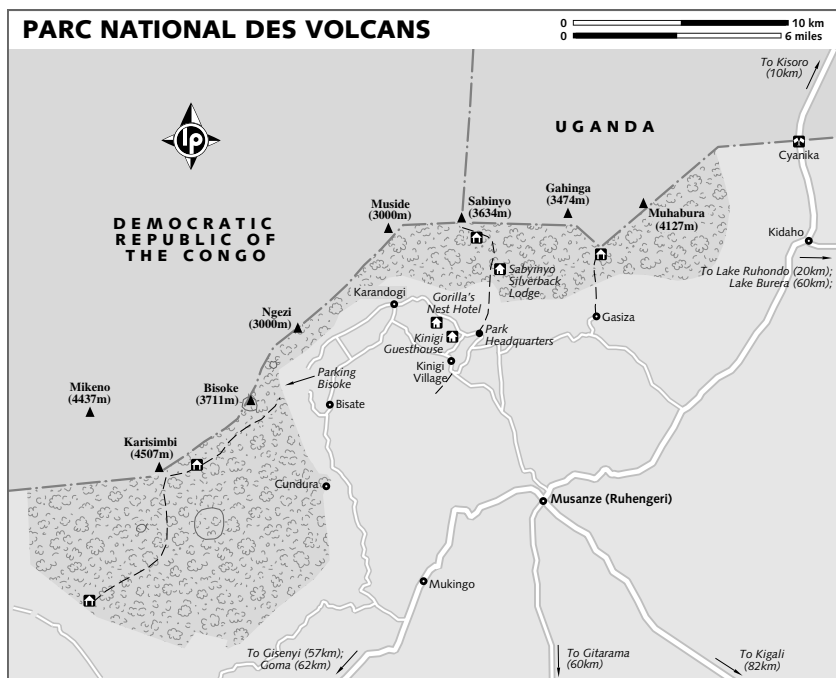
Note that there is no public transportation between Musanze and Kinigi, where the park headquarters for Parc National des Volcans are located. For more information on accessing the national park, see p571.

Getting Around

There are few taxis in Musanze, but plenty of *boda-bodas* (bicycle taxis) for those needing a rest. A typical fare from the centre to the Hotel Muhabura is around RFr200. Taxi-motors are also available, but they can be pretty optimistic with their price offers (around RFr500 to RFr1000).

PARC NATIONAL DES VOLCANS

Volcanoes National Park, which runs along the border with DRC and Uganda, is home to the Rwandan section of the Virungas. Comprised of five volcanoes – the highest, Karisimbi, is more than 4500m – the Virungas are one of the most beautiful sights in both Rwanda and the whole of Africa. As if this wasn't enough of a drawcard, the bamboo- and rainforest-covered



slopes of these volcanoes are also home to some of the last remaining sanctuaries of the endangered eastern mountain gorilla (*Gorilla beringei beringei*).

The gorillas of Parc National des Volcans were first studied in depth by primatologist George Schaller, though they were thrust into the international spotlight during the life of Dian Fossey. Prior to 1999, the entire national park was out of bounds to tourists due to heavy poaching, armed conflict, the genocide and its aftermath. Since then, however, the park has emerged as the definitive location to track the captivating mountain gorilla.

While most tourists to the park are understandably driven by the desire to have a face-to-face encounter with real gorillas in the mist, there is good reason to stay in the area once you've finished tracking. In fact, the gorillas share the park with a troop of rare golden monkeys, which are slowly being habituated to human contact. The Virungas, which tower over Rwanda, Uganda and DRC, also present a variety of rewarding climbing and trekking options.

History

Belgian colonists, who intended to protect the mountain gorillas on Karisimbi, Visoke and Mikeno in Rwanda and Belgian Congo from poachers, first gazetted the Virungas as a national park in 1925. At the time, this small conservation triangle was the very first protected area to be created on the continent of Africa. Four years later, the borders were extended further to form Parc National Albert (Albert National Park), a massive area that encompassed more than 8000 sq km.

Following the independence of Congo in 1960 and Rwanda in 1962, Albert National Park was split into two entities. A few years prior, George Schaller had conducted a survey indicating that there were only about 450 mountain gorillas left in the range. As a result, the Rwandese government stated its intention to protect the Virungas as a conservation and a tourist area, despite mounting tensions across the country.

During the early years of Rwanda's fragile independence, it wasn't poaching or fighting that harmed the gorillas most, but rather a small daisy-like flower known as

THE LIFE OF DIAN FOSSEY

When you realise the value of all life, you dwell less on what is past and concentrate more on the preservation of the future.

Dr Dian Fossey, zoologist (1932–85)

Dian Fossey was an American zoologist who spent the better part of her life at a remote camp high up on the slopes of the Virungas studying the mountain gorillas. Without her tenacious efforts to have poaching stamped out, and the work of committed locals since her violent murder, there possibly wouldn't be any of the great apes remaining in Rwanda.

Fossey studied occupational therapy at the University of California, Davis, though she was influenced by the conservation efforts of Dr Louis and Mary Leakey at a young age. In 1963 she took out a loan to travel to Tanzania where she met the couple. At the time, she learned about the pioneering work of Jane Goodall and George Schaller with chimpanzees and gorillas, respectively.

By 1966 Fossey had secured the funding and support of the Leakey family, and began conducting field research on the mountain gorillas in Kabara, Democratic Republic of the Congo. However, political unrest caused her to abandon her efforts the following year, although favourable circumstances across the border prompted her to establish the Karisoke Research Centre, a remote camp on Bisoke in the Rwandan Virungas.

Fossey was catapulted to international stardom when her photograph was snapped by Bob Campbell in 1970 and splashed across the cover of *National Geographic*. Seizing her newfound celebrity status, Fossey embarked on a massive publicity campaign aimed at saving the mountain gorillas from impending extinction. Prior to her research, most people believed that wild gorillas were savage beasts along the lines of *King Kong*. However, images of Fossey touching the gentle hands of the gorilla 'Peanuts' warmed the hearts of the general public.

Fossey was a strong advocate for what she dubbed 'active conservation', which consisted of anti-poaching patrols and habitat preservation, and was strongly opposed to promoting tourism in the region. For more information on the ethics of gorilla tourism, see the box text on p568.

a pyrethrum. Due to a large grant by the European Community (EC), the 1960s saw the conversion of half Parc National des Volcans into commercial farms for pyrethrum, which can be processed into a natural insecticide.

By the early 1970s, census reports estimated that the mountain gorilla population in the Virungas had nearly halved. At the same time, poachers were making inroads on both sides of the Rwandese–Congo border as the demand for stuffed gorilla heads and hands (which were depressingly used as ashtrays) began to burgeon. Thankfully, the plight of the mountain gorilla became an international issue following the work of the late Dian Fossey – for more information, see the boxed text above.

Gorilla tracking in Rwanda was first launched in 1979 by Amy Vedder and Bill Webber, who marketed the charismatic creatures to tourists on overland trips. By the late 1980s, the sale of gorilla permits was the country's third largest revenue earner, which was enough to convince ordinary Rwandans that

these great apes were indeed a valuable natural resource worth protecting.

In 1991, Rwanda was plunged into civil war, and Parc National des Volcans became a battlefield, a fact highlighted by an attack on the park headquarters in 1992. By the time the perpetrators of the genocide swept across Rwanda in 1994, the park had long been heavily land-mined and then abandoned as refugees fled into neighbouring DRC.

Across the border, however, the mountain gorillas were having an equally tough time surviving due to DRC's own brand of civil war and infighting. Additionally, the Congolese government showed little interest in promoting conservation, which prompted officials working in and around Parc National des Virunga to turn to corruption and illegal dealings in order to secure a living. While the national park did reopen to tourists in 2005, the situation remains tenuous at best (for more information, see the DRC chapter on p534).

In 1999, Parc National des Volcans was once again opened to tourist activities, and

Tragically, Fossey was brutally murdered on 26 December, 1985. Her skull was split open by a *panga*, a type of machete that was used by local poachers to cut the head and hands off gorillas. This bloody crime scene caused the media to speculate that poachers, who were angered by her conservationist stance, murdered her in a fit of rage.

However, a good measure of mystery surrounds Fossey's murder as she was carrying a gun at the time (although it did not have any bullets in it). This bizarre occurrence has led many to believe that someone close to her was the murderer, perhaps even a team member or a supposed friend. Following her death, Fossey was buried in the Virungas next to her favourite gorilla, Digit, who had previously been killed by poachers.

From 1985 until the Rwandan genocide in 1994, the former students of Fossey (many of whom opposed her research) directed the Karisoke Research Centre. In 1986, one of these students was captured and convicted for the murder of Fossey, although many people believe that the evidence against him was contrived, and that he was simply chosen as a convenient scapegoat.

Without Fossey, poaching in the Virungas accelerated, and duiker and leopards were quickly extinguished from the region. Following the genocide, the area also filled with refugees, who logged the forests of the Virungas to construct temporary dwellings. During this time, Karisoke was looted and eventually destroyed.

Today, Fossey is best known for her book *Gorillas in the Mist*, which is both a description of her scientific research and an insightful memoir detailing her time in Rwanda. Her book remains the best-selling book about gorillas of all time, and is something of an obligatory read before tracking mountain gorillas.

Parts of her life story were later adapted in the film *Gorillas in the Mist: The Story of Dian Fossey*, starring Sigourney Weaver. The movie was criticised for several fictitious scenes in which Fossey aggressively harasses local poachers, as well as its stylised portrayal of her affair with photographer Bob Campbell. It does, however, serve as a good introduction to the ongoing plight of the endangered eastern mountain gorilla.

although there have been occasional infiltrations from rebel groups in DRC, they have all been stopped quickly by the Rwandan army. As a result, gorilla tracking in Rwanda is today largely considered to be a risk-free pursuit, and to date there have been no tourist-directed incidents in the Rwandan Virungas. At present, there are an estimated 400 mountain gorillas occupying the Virungas range.

Orientation

Parc National des Volcans protects 160 sq km of the Rwandan Virungas. The park is also part of a 430 sq km international conservation area that includes Parc National des Virunga (p538) in DRC and Mgahinga National Park (see p499) in Uganda.

The volcanoes range in altitude from 2400 to 4500 metres, and are linked by solidified lava flows that yield incredibly fertile soil. From west to east, the volcanoes are Karisimbi, Bisoke (Visoke), Ngezi, Muside, Sabinyo, Gahinga (Mgahinga) and Muhavura (Muhavura).

The closest population centre to the national park is the small village of Kinigi, which is also conveniently the home of the park headquarters.

Information

PARK HEADQUARTERS

The park headquarters for Parc National Volcans is located in the village of Kinigi, approximately 12km north of Musanze along rough dirt roads. Assuming the rains haven't been too heavy, and the road is in decent shape, you can make the trip from Musanze in about 30 to 45 minutes.

Note that you are absolutely required to register here at 7am on the day of your scheduled tracking. If you are late, your designated slot will be forfeited and your money will not be refunded. For an overview of gorilla tracking, see p566.

The park headquarters is also where you can arrange permits for golden monkey tracking (p568), as well as climbs and treks in the Virunga volcanos (p569).

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

There are number of high profile international non-profit (NPO) organisations that are involved in wildlife conservation in the Virungas.

The Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund International

(www.gorillafund.org) Founded by the late Dian Fossey in 1978, this fund is dedicated to the protection of gorillas and their habitats through active conservation measures.

International Gorilla Conservation Programme

(www.igcp.org) Formed in 1991 through the joint efforts of the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF), Fauna & Flora International (FFI) and the World Wide Fund (WWF).

Mountain Gorilla Veterinary Project (http://

mgvp.32ad.com) Since 1986, this organisation has provided free-ranging veterinary care to mountain gorillas.

Sights & Activities

GORILLA TRACKING

An encounter with these charismatic creatures is the highlight of a trip to Africa for many visitors. An encounter with a silverback male gorilla at close quarters can be a hair-raising experience, especially if you've only ever seen large wild animals behind the bars of a cage or from the safety of a car. Yet despite their intimidating size, gorillas are remarkably non-aggressive animals, entirely vegetarian, and are usually quite safe to be around. For most people, it's a magical encounter that is worth every single dollar spent.

Make no mistake about it – gorilla tracking is no joy ride. The guides can generally find the gorillas within one to four hours of starting out, but this often involves a lot of strenuous effort scrambling through dense vegetation up steep, muddy hillsides, sometimes to altitudes of more than 3000m. At higher altitudes, you'll also have to contend with the thick overgrowth of stinging nettles, which can easily penetrate light clothing. As if fiery skin rashes weren't enough of a deterrent, it also rains a lot in this area, so the going can certainly get tough (and muddy) in parts. At this altitude the air can thin out quickly, so descend to lower altitudes if you develop an intense headache.

There are seven habituated gorilla groups in Parc National des Volcans, including the **Susa group**, which has 35-plus members. Although nearly everyone who shows up at the park headquarters is most likely gunning to track the Susa group, the rangers usually select the most able-bodied and all-around fit individuals. Even though it's the largest group in the

park, it's also the hardest to reach – you need to trek for three to four hours the up the slopes of Karisimbi at an altitude of more than 3000m.

Not everyone will get the chance to visit Susa (in fact most won't), but there were six other groups open to visitors at the time of research. The **Sabinyo group** is a good choice for anyone who doesn't want a strenuous tracking experience as they can usually be found in less than 30 minutes. **Group 13** and **Amahura** are also popular with visitors, although no matter which group you end up tracking, you're most likely going to have a memorable experience.

Visits to the gorillas are restricted to one hour and flash photography is banned. While you are visiting the gorillas, do not eat, drink, smoke or go to the bathroom in their presence. If you have any potential airborne illness, do not go tracking as gorillas are extremely susceptible to human diseases. If you must cough or sneeze in the presence of the gorillas, turn your head away and cover your face.

In theory, visitors are requested to remain more than 5m of the gorillas at all times, though in practice the guides (and the gorillas) tend to flaunt this rule. Although no tourists have ever been harmed by the gorillas, you should give them the respect and wide berth you would any wild animal.

Upon sighting the gorillas, the guides will make their presence known through a series of loud calls and grunts. This is an important part of the habituation process, and also helps to alert the gorillas to the presence and whereabouts of their visitors. Again, gorillas are surprisingly tolerant of humans, but don't be too surprised if a hormonal teen or a hulking silverback gives you a mock charge or even a playful swat!

The important thing to remember is that you should always stand your ground, and never, ever panic. Granted, it's very hard to not be scared when the largest primate on the planet is staring you down, but remember that animals have an uncanny ability to sense fear and respect authority. And, of course, it's worth pointing out that humans have caused gorillas a much, much greater degree of harm over the generations, than vice-versa.

For a compare and contrast look at the competing mountain gorilla experiences in Rwanda, Uganda and DRC, see p75.

Reservations

Fees are now a hefty US\$500 per person for a gorilla visit, which includes park entry, compulsory guides and guards. Numbers of people allowed to visit each of the groups are limited to a maximum of eight people per day, limiting the total number of daily permits to an absolute maximum of 56. Children under 15 are not allowed to visit the gorillas.

Bookings for gorilla permits can be made through the ORTPN tourist office (p551) in Kigali or a Rwandan tour company (p552 and p560). Those visiting on a tour package will have everything arranged for them, while independent travellers can secure permits if they make reservations early on. Frustratingly enough, it is not always that easy to deal with ORTPN by phone or email from overseas, so it is sometimes easier to book a permit through a Rwandan tour operator to be twice as sure the booking is confirmed.

With tourism in Rwanda now on the up and up, it is getting more difficult to secure permits during the peak seasons of December/January and July/August, so book well in advance if you want to be assured of a spot. Bookings are secured with a US\$100 deposit, and full payment must be paid upon your arrival in Kigali. However, given the uncertain nature of the banking system in Rwanda, it is much safer and wiser to transfer the full amount before arriving in country.

Independent travellers who have only decided to visit the gorillas in Rwanda once in the East Africa region can turn up at the ORTPN office in Kigali, and try to secure a booking at the earliest available date. During the high season, waits of several days to a week are not uncommon, but you might get lucky and snatch up a permit quickly as cancellations do occur.

If bookings are really solid, consider tracking the mountain gorillas in Bwindi Impenetrable Forest (p488) in Uganda.

Having made a booking and paid the fees, head to the park headquarters of Parc National des Volcans in Kinigi, and get ready for the experience of a lifetime. Ideally, you should spend the night before your track in either Kinigi or Musanze as you need to check in at 7am on the day that your permit is valid. Again, it's worth emphasising that if you are late, your disig-

nated slot will be forfeited, and your money will not be refunded.

At 7.30am, gorilla groups are assigned, and a small briefing is held over a cup of hot tea or coffee – it's colder in these parts than you might imagine. Around 8am, trackers are requested to start making their way to their respective trailheads, and by 8.30am the tracking has already commenced. For information on getting to the park headquarters in Kinigi, as well as the various trailheads for the track itself, see the Getting There & Away section on p571.

What to Bring

As we've previously mentioned, you need to be prepared for a potentially long, wet and cold trek through equatorial rainforest. A strong and sturdy pair of hiking shoes is a must, as is plenty of warm and waterproof clothing. The stinging nettles at higher elevations can really put a damper on your experience, so consider wearing pants and long sleeve shirts with a bit of thickness – if you have them, gloves can really make a difference.

Despite the potential for high altitudes and cold temperatures, you also need to be prepared for the strong sun. Floppy hats, bandanas, sunglasses and lots of sunscreen are a good idea, as are plenty of cold and hydrating fluids. Sugary snacks are also good for a quick energy boost, especially if you're tracking the Susa group for hours and hours on end. Before arriving at the park headquarters, it's probably a good idea to stock up on supplies in Musanze.

If your daypack isn't completely waterproof, be sure to wrap your camera in a waterproof bag – this is not the time for an equipment malfunction! While binoculars are certainly not necessary to spot the gorillas, they are useful for scoping birds or other distant animals.

When you check in at the park headquarters, you may be asked for identification by the park rangers. To avoid any potential hassles, carry your passport with you at all times in addition to your gorilla tracking permit.

Porters are available for the trek, though they're not absolutely necessary, and you are requested to pay a few dollars for this service. The guides, guards, drivers and any porters will expect a tip – the amount is entirely up to you, and ultimately depends on the quality of the service. However, keep in mind that

THE FUTURE OF THE EASTERN MOUNTAIN GORILLA

No, I won't let them turn this mountain into a goddamn zoo.

*Sigourney Weaver as Dr Dian Fossey in the movie
'Gorillas in the Mist: The Life of Dian Fossey'*

Teetering on the brink

Although a 2008 scientific study revealed that the total population of western gorillas in Africa is well above 125,000, these individuals are largely confined to the Congo Basin. Genetically speaking, western gorillas diverged from eastern gorillas about two million years ago, and are thus a very, very different species of primate.

In the mid-1990s, the total population of eastern gorillas was estimated to be around 17,000, though it is important to realise that there are two (and possibly even three) distinct subspecies: the eastern lowland gorilla and the eastern mountain gorilla (which may soon be further subdivided).

Here is where the numbers get a bit depressing: a 2004 article in *National Geographic* estimated that ongoing conflict in DRC had reduced the population of eastern lowland gorillas from 16,000 in the mid-1990s to no more than 5000. At present, mountain gorillas number no more than about 700 individuals, and are divided roughly in half between the Virunga range and Bwindi Impenetrable Forest (p488) in Uganda.

However, scientists now believe that the mountain gorillas in Bwindi and the Virungas are most likely different subspecies, and may in fact be different species all together. If this hypothesis were correct, it would mean that the entire species of eastern mountain gorillas in the Virunga range number no more than 350 individuals. Regardless, eastern mountain gorillas are a critically endangered species that are teetering on the brink of extinction. Fortunately, both international and domestic conservation efforts in Rwanda have helped bolster the future chances of our closely related primate relatives.

Fossey's legacy

Throughout her life, Dian Fossey was a proponent of 'active conservation', or the belief that endangered species are best protected through rigorous anti-poaching measures and habitat

the locals know you're paying US\$500 for the privilege of gorilla tracking, so try not to be too stingy.

GOLDEN MONKEY TRACKING

Golden monkey (*Cercopithecus kandti*) tracking is a relative newcomer on the wildlife scene of East Africa, but is rapidly rising in popularity both in Parc National des Volcans and across the border at Mgahinga National Park (p499) in Uganda. More like chimp viewing than a gorilla encounter, these beautiful and active monkeys bound about the branches of bigger trees. If you're looking for a reason to spend an extra day in the park, don't miss the chance to track these rare animals.

Golden monkeys, which are a subspecies of the wider spread blue monkey, are endemic to the Albertine Rift Valley, and are distinguished by their gold body colouration, which contrasts sharply to black patches on their extremities. Classified as an endangered spe-

cies, golden monkeys can only be seen in the Virungas, as deforestation and population growth in the Great Lakes region has greatly affected their home range. While their exact number in Parc National des Volcans is unknown, a 2003 survey in neighbouring Uganda counted approximately 4000 individuals.

The idea to track golden monkeys first arose in 2002 as a joint effort between ORTPN and the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund International. A couple of groups in accessible areas of the park were selected for habituation, and researchers set about studying the movements and habits of these little understand creatures. The work was extremely slow and frustrating as golden monkeys are shier than gorillas by nature, though significant progress was made.

In 2003, the first golden monkey tracking permits were issued to tourists, and in recent years the animals have become much more accustomed to human visitors. Since

protection. As a result, she strongly opposed the promotion of tourism in the Virunga range, though the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund International has changed their position on the issue since her untimely death.

Fossey spent much of her life habituating mountain gorillas to human contact in an effort to expose the world to their tenuous plight for survival. As a result, she, perhaps more than anyone else in the world, was fully aware of the dangers of increased human traffic in the Virungas. Sadly, habituated gorillas are significantly more vulnerable to poachers, as evidenced by the 1995 murders of seven gorillas in Bwindi, the 2002 murders of two gorillas in Parc National des Volcans, and the 2007 debacle in DRC (see p538).

Humans and gorillas are also genetically similar enough to share many of the same diseases. Since the very first days of gorilla tourism, there has always been the fear that tourists could transmit a virulent strain of the measles or influenza to the habituated gorillas, which would have disastrous effects on such as small population group.

Conservation through tourism

The main argument against the conservation philosophy promoted by Fossey is that species cannot be preserved in a vacuum. On the contrary, eastern mountain gorillas exist alongside human communities, which means that a careful balance between man and animal must be reached.

Today, a policy of community-based conservation is being promoted in Rwanda, which seeks to encourage growth in tourism through environmental education and improved infrastructure. By encouraging a sense of local ownership, and funnelling part of the revenues from gorilla tracking permits back into the community, the government has been successful in convincing ordinary Rwandans that gorillas are a vital natural resource worth protecting.

If you're not convinced, just look at the numbers – gorilla tracking permits have the potential to generate as much as US\$28,000 per day. Increased foot traffic in the Virunga range is also stimulating the local economy through job creation and tourist revenue (see the Sabyinyo Community Lodge on p572). While tourism is certainly not without its faults, eventually it might end up saving the eastern mountain gorilla from extinction.

golden monkeys are relatively unknown outside of Rwanda, the tracking initiative is certainly worth your support as it generates valuable income used to protect the species from extinction.

Permits to track the golden monkeys cost US\$100 (this includes the US\$25 park fee entry), and are easy to get a hold of – simply inquire at the ORTPN office (p551) in Kigali or Musanze (p559), or possibly even at the park headquarters (p565) in Kigini. Maximum group size is six individuals and, like the gorillas, you're only permitted to spend one hour with the golden monkeys. While it's certainly not a substitute for gorilla tracking, it is a good complement nevertheless.

CLIMBING & TREKKING THE VOLCANOES

Dian Fossey once famously declared: 'In the heart of Central Africa, so high up that you shiver more than you sweat, are great, old

volcanoes towering up almost 15,000 feet, and nearly covered with rich, green rainforest – the Virungas'.

Indeed, these stunning volcanoes serve as an evocative backdrop for a guided climb or trek. The ascents pass through some remarkable changes of vegetation, ranging from thick forests of bamboo, giant lobelia or hagenia on to alpine meadows. If the weather is favourable, the reward is some spectacular views over the mountain chain.

There are several possibilities for climbing up to the summits of one or more of the volcanoes in the park, with treks ranging in length from several hours to two days. A guide is compulsory and is included in your US\$25 per day park fee; additional porters are optional. Note that it is forbidden to cut down trees or otherwise damage vegetation in the park, and you are only allowed to make fires in the designated camping areas.

KWITA IZINA: THE GORILLA NAMING CEREMONY

In traditional Rwandan culture, the birth of a child is a momentous event that is celebrated with a tremendous amount of fanfare. The birth is marked by the presentation of the new infant to the general public, who then proceed to suggest round after round of possible names. After careful consideration, the proud parents select one for their newborn, and celebrate the naming with copious amounts of dining, drinking and dancing.

Gorillas in Rwanda are often awarded the same level of respect and admiration as humans, which is why it is only fitting that they should be named in a similar manner. Since June 2005, the annual Kwita Izina (Gorilla Naming Ceremony) has been a countrywide event that is increasingly drawing a larger share of the spotlight. From local community events in Musanze to gala balls in Kigali and Gisenyi, Kwita Izina is well on its way to becoming a global brand.

To date, more than 65 furry little baby gorillas have been named at Kwita Izina, which has subsequently generated a respectable amount of revenue through fundraising efforts. Following the 2007 celebration, enough funds were raised to help launch the Sabyinyo Silverback Lodge (p572), an upmarket community-run lodge that employs more than 600 locals, 80% of which are women.

The event has even attracted a number of celebrities and conservationists including Natalie Portman and Jack Hanna, testament to the growing appeal of the event and the future potential for Rwandan tourism. For more information on Kwita Izina, check out the official website at www.kwitizina.org.

One of the best parts of climbing and trekking the volcanoes is that you will be awarded ample opportunities to view wildlife (sans gorillas and golden monkeys of course). The most common herbivores in the park are bushbucks and black-fronted duikers; buffaloes, bushpigs and giant forest hogs are infrequently spotted. Also, be sure to inspect the hollows of trees for hyraxes, genets, dormice, squirrels and forest pouched rates.

There is also incredibly varied birdlife in the national park, so don't forget to bring along a good pair of binoculars and a field guide if you have one. The richest bird-watching zone is in the hagenia forests, where you can expect to see turaco, francolins, sunbirds, waxbills, crimsonwings and various hawks and buzzards.

Karisimbi

Climbing Karisimbi (4507m), the highest summit in the Virungas, takes two long and taxing days. The track follows the saddle between Bisoke and Karisimbi, and then ascends the northwestern flank of the latter. Some five hours after beginning the trek, there is a metal hut in which to spend the night (the hut keys are available at Parking Bisoke). The rocky and sometimes snow-covered summit is a further two to four hours walk through alpine vegetation.

To do this trek, take plenty of warm clothing and a very good sleeping bag. It gets very cold, especially at the metal hut, which is on a bleak shoulder of the mountain at 3660m. The wind whips through here, frequently with fog, so there is little warmth from the sun.

The two-day climb up Karisimbi costs US\$150, including park fees and a guide, and can easily be arranged at either the ORTPN office (p559) in Musanze or the park headquarters (p565) in Kigini.

Bisoke

The return trip to Bisoke (3711m) takes six to seven hours from Parking Bisoke. The ascent takes you up the steep southwestern flanks of the volcano to the summit, where you can see the crater lake. The descent follows a track on the northwestern side, from where there are magnificent views over the Parc National des Virungas. This climb costs US\$50, including park fees and a guide.

Dian Fossey's Grave

A popular trek is to the site of the former Karisoke Research Camp, where Dian Fossey (p564) is buried alongside many of her primate subjects, including the famous Digit. From the park headquarters, it's about a 30-minute drive to the trailhead, followed by two to three hour hike to the ruins of the

camp. This excursion costs US\$50, including park fees and a guide; though you are responsible for your own transportation to/from the trailhead.

Other Treks

Before the 1994 genocide, there were several other treks available that have not yet fully been reinstated by the park service; they may be reintroduced during the shelf life of this book.

- The return walk to Ngezi (about 3000m) takes three to four hours from Parking Bisoke. This is one of the easiest of the treks, and at the right time of the day it is possible to see a variety of animals coming down from the hills to drink at streams and springs.
- Climbing Sabinyo (3634m) takes five to six hours from the park headquarters near Kinigi. The track ascends the southeastern face of the volcano, ending up with a rough scramble over steep lava beds along a very narrow path.
- Climbing Gahinga (3474m; in Uganda) and Muhabura (4127m) is a two-day trip from Gasiza. The summit of the first volcano is reached after a climb of about four hours along a track that passes through a swampy saddle between the two mountains. The trip to the summit of Muhabura takes about four hours from the saddle.

Sleeping & Eating

Note that all of the lodges below include breakfast in the price. Lunch, dinner and drinks are also available for both non-guests and guests for a small fee.

Our pick **Kinigi Guesthouse** (☎ 546984; s/d from US\$40/50) This locally-run guesthouse gets our pick for being the best-value option in the vicinity of the national park, as well as an added distinction for its sustainable merits. Located very close to park headquarters in Kinigi village, all profits from this local lodge are ploughed back into the Association de Solidarité des Femmes Rwandaises, which assists vulnerable Rwandan women of all backgrounds and ages. Accommodation is in a small clutch of wooden bungalows that are set in lush gardens with views of the towering Virungas. The staff is extremely friendly and helpful, and they'll whip you up a hot breakfast before you dash off to track the gorillas.

Gorilla's Nest Camp (☎ 546331; s/d from US\$80/120) Although it's more expensive than Kinigi Guesthouse, this upmarket option is one of the best accommodation choices in the vicinity of Parc National des Volcans. Situated near the park headquarters, you don't have to worry about getting up early and making the drive from Musanze to arrive before registration. The rooms themselves are very smart, with swish new amenities that complement the verdant views of the neighbouring forested slopes.

Getting There & Away

The main access point for Parc National des Volcans is the nearby town of Musanze (Ruhengeri). For information on getting here from other points in Rwanda, see p562.

The park headquarters, where you are required to check in at 7am on the day of your scheduled gorilla tracking, is located in the village of Kinigi, approximately 12km north of Musanze along dirt roads. The condition of these roads varies considerably based on the extent of recent rainfall, though you can expect to make the trip from Musanze in about 30 to 45 minutes.

Note that there is no public transportation from Musanze to Kinigi, although you can arrange to rent a vehicle and driver for the day (around US\$100) through the ORTPN office or any of the travel agencies in Musanze (p560). However, considering that most people in Musanze need to be in Kinigi the next morning at 7am, it really isn't too hard to hitch a ride with fellow trackers, especially during the high season and at weekends.

It is also necessary to arrange transport from the park headquarters to the point where you start climbing up to where the gorillas are situated. Again, you can rent a vehicle and driver in Musanze if you want the assurance of your own wheels. In practice, however, it should be possible to hitch a ride with other tourists or expats who have their own vehicles.

One option worth considering if you have a few friends is to hire a car and a driver in Kigali. Prices are around US\$150 per day, and will give you reliable transport to/from Musanze, the park headquarters in Kinigi and the trailhead for the gorilla tracking. Any of the travel agencies in Kigali (p552) can make all of the necessary arrangements.

COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM

While it's certainly an expensive proposition to spend a night or two here, the **Sabyinyo Silverback Lodge** (☎ 254-202734000; www.governorscamp.com/property_descriptions_sabyinyo_silverback_lodge.php; r person low/high season US\$371/644; 🏠) is a perfect example of how sustainable tourism can empower a local community to protect their natural environment.

Boasting a hefty price tag of US\$1.2 million, the Sabyinyo Silverback Lodge was a joint partnership between the Sabyinyo Community Lodge Association (SACOLA) and the highly exclusive Governors' Camp Collection of tented camps and lodges. Part of the money used for construction was also derived from fundraising efforts associated with the Kwita Izina gorilla naming ceremony (see the box text on p570).

While the ecolodge certainly required a heavy investment by the local community, it has thus far benefited from the impeccable management of the Governors' Camp Collection. With only 18 beds on the property, hotel guests are treated as personal friends of the management, which results in a highly personalised level of service. Accommodation is in Venetian plaster cottages with Rwandese-style terracotta tile roofs, spacious sitting areas, individual fireplaces, stylish en suite bathrooms and sheltered verandas.

You really do need to dig deep into your pockets for the privilege of staying here (rates do include full board and activities), though you can take comfort in the fact that SACOLA gets US\$50 per bed per night in addition to 7.5% of all quarterly profits. To date, these revenues have been used to implement several community projects, including a 74km buffalo wall to protect local crops as well as a public water facility.

More importantly, the Sabyinyo Silverback Lodge is an example of community-based conservation, which is absolutely pivotal to the future survival of the eastern mountain gorillas.

GISENYI

Land-locked Rwanda may be a long way from the ocean, but that doesn't mean that you can't have a beach holiday here. On the contrary, if you take another look at the map, you'll quickly realise that Rwanda's eastern border with DRC runs along the entire length of Lake Kivu. One of the Great Lakes in the Albertine Rift Valley, Lake Kivu has a maximum depth of nearly 500 metres, and is one of the 20 deepest and most voluminous lakes in the world.

Of course, most travellers in Gisenyi are perfectly content to stick to the shores, especially since they're surprisingly sandy, and fringed with all manners of tropical vegetation. While much of the Lake Kivu frontage is lined with landscaped villas, plush hotels and private clubs, the town itself projects a languid air of some forgotten upcountry backwater. But this is the precisely the low-key charm that lures an eclectic mix of rich Rwandans, expat escapees and independent travellers.

In fact, the biggest obstacle in the way of Gisenyi assuming a full-on resort status is simply its ongoing image problem. The town is unfortunately remembered as the location of a major flashpoint during the Rwandan

Civil War, the 1994 genocide and the First and Second Congo Wars. Indeed, sharing a border with DRC hasn't done wonders for the town's reputation, even though Gisenyi is today a safe haven of peace and tranquillity.

Even if you're not a devoted sun worshipper, Gisenyi is still an incredibly scenic and picturesque spot to relax after a few days of rough tracking and trekking in Parc National des Volcans. Gisenyi also serves as a base for day-trips to Goma (p536) in neighbouring DRC. From here, you can check out the lava flows from Nyiragongo (3470m), which blew its top in 2002 and swallowed much of the town. Deeper excursions into the Congo are ill advised, though the border crossing was stable and secure at the time of research. Check the situation carefully before making any decisions.

History

The first European to visit Lake Kivu was the German count Adolf von Götzen in 1894, although it was the early accounts of the Duke of Mecklenburg that are credited with fixing the lake in the European imagination. In 1907, the Duke declared that Kivu was 'the most beautiful of all the Central African lakes, framed in by banks which fall back steeply

from the rugged masses of rock, at the rear the stately summits of eight Virunga volcanoes'.

Of courses, the lake's history stretches back eons and eons before the age of European colonisation. A shallow lake was most likely formed here approximately two million years ago by the very same tectonic activity that wrenched open the Rift Valley. However, the lake in its present shape formed about 20,000 years ago when lava flows from the Virungas created a natural dam, separating Kivu from Lake Edward, and substantially increasing its water levels.

Interestingly enough, Lake Kivu is one of only three known 'exploding lakes' (the other two are the Cameroonian Lakes Nyos and Monoun), which experience violent lake overturns dubbed limnic eruptions. This rare type of natural disaster results when carbon dioxide (CO₂) suddenly erupts from deep lake water, suffocating wildlife, livestock and humans, and causing violent tsunamis. For more information, see the box text p574.

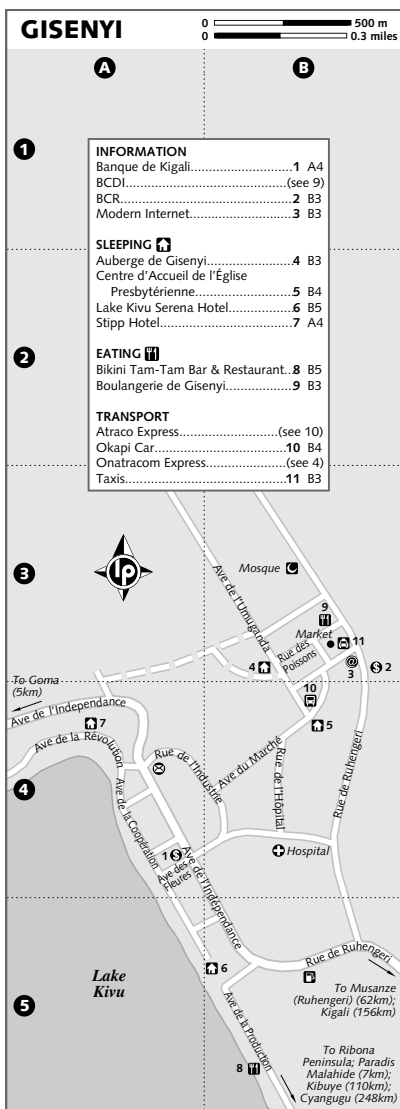
Lake Kivu gained notoriety as a place where many of the victims of the Rwandan genocide were dumped. On the Congolese side of the border, the adjacent provinces of North and South Kivu remain major conflict areas that show little signs of abating despite a 2003 peace treaty ending the Second Congo War. Once again, however, Gisenyi was at the time of research a veritable oasis of sun and sand.

Orientation

Gisenyi is roughly divided into upper and lower towns, though most tourist services cluster around the lower end along the shores of Lake Kivu. The road into town from Musanze and Kigali deposits you at the eastern end of Gisenyi; you can continue west to the border post for DRC. The smoking massif that is Nyiragongo volcano marks the northern edge of town, and is clearly a force of nature that is not to be trifled with.

Information

BCR (Rue de Ruhengeri), representing Western Union, and **BCDI** (Rue des Poissons), representing Moneygram, both have branches near the market, while **Banque de Kigali** (Ave de Fleures) is near the lakefront in the lower part of town. Currently these banks can only deal with cash exchanges.



Modern Internet (Rue de Ruhengeri) offers the best internet connection in town, sometimes the only connection.

There is no DRC consulate here in Gisenyi, but visas (US\$35) are available on the border if crossing to Goma or if you are going to visit the mountain gorillas in Parc National des Virungas (p538).

WARNING: LIMNIC ERUPTIONS

There are certain parts of Lake Kivu, particularly around Gisenyi, where it is very, very dangerous to swim. The culprits here are not hippos or crocs, but rather volcanic gases that are released from the lakebed. In the absence of a strong wind, these toxic gases can collect on the surface of the water, and quite a few people have been asphyxiated as a result of these so-called limnic eruptions. Moral of the story: watch where local people swim, and make sure you're doing the same.

To date, only two limnic eruptions have ever been observed; on both occasions the consequences were deadly. In 1984, 37 people were asphyxiated following a limnic eruption at Lake Monoun in Cameroon. Two years later, a second even deadlier eruption occurred at neighbouring Lake Nyos, releasing over 80 million cubic meters of CO₂, and killing between 1700 and 1800 people.

A major limnic eruption has never been recorded at Kivu, though the deepwater lake contains massive amounts of dissolved CO₂ as well as methane. In fact, sample sediments taken by Professor Robert Hecky from the University of Michigan indicate that living creatures in the lake tend to go extinct approximately every thousand years or so.

If an eruption does occur, the exploding underwater methane is likely to push a huge cloud of carbon dioxide above the surface of the lake, as well as triggering as a series of tsunamis along the shoreline. Since CO₂ is denser than air, it sinks quickly to the ground, pushing breathable air up into the sky. At this point, there is little you can really do to survive, and it's only a matter of time before you succumb to CO₂ poisoning, suffocation, drowning or a dastardly combination of all three. To make matters worse, the last thing you will probably smell will be the warm vapours from all the combusting methane, which are somewhat reminiscent of a giant, earthy fart.

Sights**RUBONA PENINSULA**

Roughly 7km outside of town, along a lovely lakeshore road, is the Rubona peninsula, home to both Gisenyi's main harbour and the Bralirwa Brewery. The brewery, which produces the Primus lager you've no doubt been downing since your arrival in Rwanda, is not officially set up for tourism. However, the staff is usually keen on showing people around (they're expecting tips), though keep cameras well out of sight as they are very sensitive about photographs.

Actually, you may be surprised to discover that the boilers at the Bralirwa Brewery are largely powered by methane gas extracted from Lake Kivu. Seriously. The project is something of a litmus test to determine whether or not large-scale extraction of methane is possible, which in theory could increase Rwanda's energy generation capability by as much as 2000%, enabling the country to sell electricity to its neighbours. Degassing Lake Kivu also may help in preventing a Cameroonian-style limnic eruption from taking place in Rwanda and DRC.

Rubona is also home to some natural hot springs, which are reported by locals to cure a variety of ailments. While you're going to have to ask around if you want to find them, it's certainly worth the effort, especially if you're having second thoughts about swimming in Lake Kivu. Then again, you might change

your mind when you see locals boiling their potatoes in the hot springs!

GOMA, DRC

A popular trip from Gisenyi involves crossing the border into the Democratic Republic of the Congo, from where you can visit the bustling market town of Goma, trek the slopes of Nyiragongo volcano or visit the gorillas in Parc National des Virungas. Keep in mind however that all of these activities are contingent on the security situation, which is extremely volatile given how undemocratic the Congo can be. For more information on the potential perils and pitfalls that await you in DRC, check out our detour chapter on p534.

Activities

For those with the money to burn, there are a variety of water sports available at the upmarket hotels. For those without the money, swimming and sunbathing on the sandy beaches are free. Generally speaking, far-reaching boat trips out on Lake Kivu are discouraged given the general climate of lawlessness in neighbouring DRC.

Sleeping

The cheaper places are all found around the upper part of town, but it is better to spend a little more and stay down near the shores

of Kivu where you can really soak up the lakeside atmosphere.

Centre d'Accueil de l'Église Presbytérienne (☎ 540397; Ave du Marché; dm/d from RFr1500/6000) This church-run hostel has the cheapest beds in town – dorms come with varying numbers of beds, while the double rooms are spic and span with en suite facilities. Basic meals are served in a small restaurant, and there is a craft shop selling banana-leaf cards and stuffed toys to raise money for local women's groups.

Auberge de Gisenyi (☎ 540385; Ave de l'Umuganda; s/d RFr5000/6000) The pick of the pack among the cheaper guesthouses in the upper part of town, the rooms here face onto an attractive courtyard garden of tropical blooms. The doubles are almost suites, making them a good deal, and the restaurant is popular at night for hot food and cold beer.

Paradis Malahide (☎ 648650; Rubona Peninsula; d from US\$30) Located along the shores of the Rubona Peninsula just south of Gisenyi, this brand new lodge gets wonderful reviews from loyal guests. Accommodation is in stone bungalows scattered around a small bar and restaurant, but the highlight of the property is clearly the stunning lakeside location. To get the most out of your stay, rent a motorboat and do some swimming and fishing, though please stay on this side of the border. To reach Paradis Malahide, follow the road towards Rubona, and turn right onto the lakeshore road just before you reach the brewery; the lodge will be on your left-hand side.

Stipp Hotel (☎ 540540; www.stippag.co.rw; Ave de la Révolution; s/d from US\$125/150; 📶 📺 🚿) Gisenyi's first true boutique hotel rose from the ashes of a neglected colonial building and is now one of the classiest places to bed down along the shores of Lake Kivu. Preferring intimacy to opulence, the Stipp is only home to a small assortment of individually decorated rooms, which strike an ideal blend between colonial elegance and modern convenience. Whether you're soaking in the enormous bathtubs, strolling around the lush garden or dining in one of the town's best restaurants, you're sure to have a relaxing stay here.

Lake Kivu Serena Hotel (☎ 541111; www.serenahotels.com/rwanda/lake_kivu/home.asp; Ave de la Coopération; s/d from US\$135/165; 📶 📺 🚿) This hotel has changed hands more times than can count though it's certainly in good hands now that the exalted Serena chain is running the show. The Lake Kivu Serena brims with refined lux-

ury from the grand colonial dining rooms to the manicured grounds. While the Serena has a stunner of a swimming pool, and some prime beachfront of the lakeshore, the building itself has a dark past. During the genocide, it briefly served as the headquarters for the interim government, enabling them to flee into DRC when things got too hot.

Eating & Drinking

Most visitors end up eating at the bigger hotels as there isn't a great selection of restaurants in town. There are, however, several simple restaurants on the main road in the upper part of town serving cheap meals, though the standard isn't much.

Among the hotels, the Stipp Hotel probably has the best restaurant – the menu is predominantly French, and draws a large crowd most nights. The restaurant at the Lake Kivu Serena is also highly regarded, and serves a wide assortment of continental cuisine. Meals at both establishments run from about RFr3000 to RFr10,000 and service at either place is swift and professional.

In a great location on the beach in the south of town, the menu at **Bikini Tam-Tam Bar & Restaurant** (Ave de la Production; mains RFr1500-3000) is limited but the setting more than makes up for it. Who knows where they came up with the name, but it's easy to remember. It gets busier at the weekends when the drinking crowd rolls in.

For self-caterers, there's a wide variety of fruit and vegetables available at the main market. For cheese, meats, yoghurts and fresh bread try **Boulangerie de Gisenyi** (Rue des Poissons).

Getting There & Away

BOAT

All passenger ferries across Lake Kivu to other Rwandan ports were suspended at the time of writing. However, there are fast boats between Goma and Bukavu, though this would require a DRC visa, and there are potentially serious security question marks over this route.

BUS & MINIBUS

It is a beautiful journey from Musanze (Ruhengeri) through rural farms and villages and there are panoramic views of Lake Kivu as the road descends into Gisenyi. **Okapi Car** (Ave du Marché) and **Atraco Express** (Ave du Marché) operate minibuses between Gisenyi and Kigali (RFr2500, three hours); the advantage with

these services is that it does not stop all the time for people getting on and off. There are also regular minibuses to Kigali (RFR1800, four hours) and Musanze (RFR1000, two hours).

Onatracom Express (Ave de l'Umuganda) runs big buses and has three services a day to Kigali (RFR2000), passing through Musanze (Ruhengeri) (RFR1200). All the buses terminate on Ave de l'Umuganda.

There are only infrequent minibuses running between Gisenyi and Kibuye (RFR1500, six hours) – inquire locally as schedules are highly variable.

It is easy enough to reach the border by taxi-motor for RFR250 or taxi for RFR1000. For the lowdown on crossing the border into DRC, see p593.

Getting Around

If you need wheels, taxi-motors do the run between the market and lakeside areas of town for around RFR250.

SOUTHWESTERN RWANDA

The endless mountains and valleys don't stop as you head south towards the border with Burundi. While the gorillas in Parc National des Volcans of Rwanda tend to garner almost everybody's attention, Southwestern Rwanda is home to East Africa's largest montane forest, namely Parc National de Nyungwe, one of the most primate-rich areas in the world. The region is also home to the historic colonial and intellectual centre Huye (Butare), which plays hosts to one of East Africa's best ethnographic museums.

HUYE (BUTARE)

Huye (Butare) is one of the most distinguished towns in Rwanda, having served as the country's most prominent intellectual centre since the colonial era. Home to the National University of Rwanda, the National Institute of Scientific Research and the excellent National Museum of Rwanda, Huye may be a step down in size after the capital, but it is certainly no lightweight on the Rwandan stage.

Historically speaking, Huye has always played a prominent role in regional affairs. During the era of Belgian occupation, the

town was the colonial administrative headquarters of the northern half of Ruanda-Urundi. While Huye may have lost a bit of ground to Kigali after independence, today it still manages to maintain its political relevance, especially since it's ruled by legions of Rwanda's academic elite.

While Huye isn't a tourist destination in the traditional sense, it is nevertheless an interesting stopover on your way out to Parc National de Nyungwe. The university is home to a couple of interesting sights, including the National Museum, which is widely regarded as one of the finest ethnographic museums in East Africa. The heavy concentration of liberal college students roaming the streets also makes for an interesting atmosphere.

Note that in 2006, the name of the town was changed from Butare to Huye following an administrative reorganisation of Rwanda's 12 former provinces. Since prior boundaries were drawn along tribal divisions, the country was reorganised into more neutral divisions: North, South, East, West and Kigali. At the time of research, both names were still being used, though most Rwandans were promoting the new name of Huye.

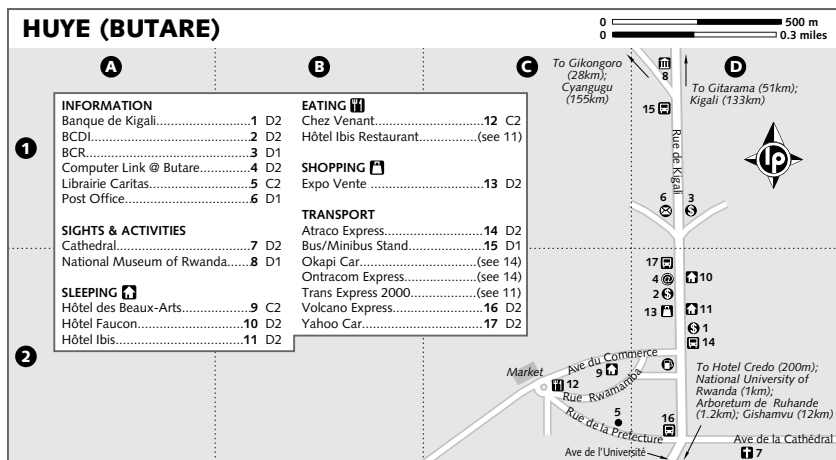
History

The tradition of Butare as an academic centre dates back to 1900 when it hosted the first catholic mission in present-day Rwanda. As prominent intellectuals and religious figures were drawn to the area, Butare grew in favour amongst the Belgian occupiers. Following the death of Queen Astrid, the Swedish wife of King Leopold III, the town was renamed Astrida in 1935.

After independence in 1962, the town's name was changed back to Butare as it launched a strong bid to serve as the capital of Rwanda. Although Kigali was eventually chosen due to its central location, Butare was selected to host the country's first university, which opened its doors to students in 1963.

In the early days of the 1994 genocide, Tutsis and moderate Hutus fled to Butare in the hopes that its intellectual tradition would reign over the ensuing madness. For a short while, the Tutsi prefect of Butare, Jean Baptiste-Habyarimana, managed to maintain peace and order in the town.

Sadly however, Habyarimana was quickly murdered by the Interahamwe, and replaced by Colonel Tharchisse Muvunyi. Under his



tenure, Butare was the site of horrific massacres that claimed the lives of nearly a quarter of a million people. Although Muvunyi fled to Britain after the genocide, he was eventually arrested and convicted.

Orientation

Despite its distinguished role as Rwanda's intellectual centre, Huye really isn't much more than a glorified town. Assuming the sun isn't beating down too hard, you shouldn't have any problem walking from the town centre out to either the National Museum or the university campus.

Information

There are branches of BCR, BCDI, and Banque de Kigali on the main Rue de Kigali, but they can only deal with cash.

Computer Link (Rue de Kigali; per hr Rf500) The place for Internet access in town.

Librairie Caritas (Rue de la Prefecture) A good bookshop frequented by students from the university.

Post office (Rue de Kigali)

Sights & Activities

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF RWANDA

This excellent **museum** (☎ 530586; Rue de Kigali; admission Rf1000; ⌚ 7-5pm) was given to the city as a gift from Belgium in 1989 to commemorate 25 years of independence. While the building itself is certainly one of the most beautiful structures in the city, this museum wins top marks from having one of the best ethnological and archaeological collections in the entire region.

While you certainly don't need more than an hour to stroll through all of the exhibits, take your time as there are some very interesting items on display here. Some of the highlights include the costumes of Rwanda's famous Intore dancers (inquire at reception about performances; see Entertainment p578), traditional farming tools and household items, geological displays and life-size model villages.

The museum is about 1km north of the centre, past the minibus stand. You can either walk it, try for a short hitch or jump on a *boda-boda* for around Rf250.

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF RWANDA

Rwanda's finest institution of learning suffered terribly during the 1994 genocide, though today there are visible signs that it's turning towards the future with hope and optimism. Strolling through its campus is a pleasant diversion, especially if you find yourself at the **Arboretum de Ruhande**. Started by the Belgians in 1934, this attractive and peaceful arboretum is a great place to learn about African flora while indulging in a bit of leafy shade.

CATHEDRAL

Huye is also home to Rwanda's largest **cathedral**, which was constructed in the 1930s to commemorate the life of Princess Astrid. The redbrick building is still used for religious worship, so stop by if you happen to hear the sounds of gospel.

Sleeping

Hôtel des Beaux-Arts (☎ 530032; Ave du Commerce; r RFr4000-6000) Set a little way back from Ave du Commerce, this hotel has quite a bit of character for a cheapie. The hotel is attractively decorated with local products, and there's a handicraft shop selling a selection of what is displayed on the walls – all rooms include hot-water bathrooms, making them the real deal.

Hôtel Faucon (☎ 086-17657; Rue de Kigali; d/apr from RFr10,000/20,000) At one point in time, this place provided serious competition for the Ibis, though standards have slipped over the decades. However, this is great news for budget travellers as it offers huge rooms and apartments at rock-bottom prices.

Hotel Credo (☎ 530505; Ave de l'Université; s RFr10,000-25,000, d RFr15,000-30,000; 📺 🚰) A modern hotel on the road to the university, this place draws well-to-do Rwandans visiting their kids at college, as well as business folk travelling between Rwanda and Burundi. Rooms are smart and thoroughly modern, and are priced according to their size and the degree of available amenities.

Hôtel Ibis (☎ 530335; Rue de Kigali; s RFr10,000-25,000, d RFr15,000-30,000; 📺 🚰) Competing with the Credo for the title of the best accommodation in town, the Ibis is a classic hotel with a touch more class. While rooms and facilities aren't as slick as the Credo, the premises are positively brimming with personality.

Eating & Drinking

Like many towns in Rwanda, this is another place where most visitors tend to eat at the guesthouses and hotels. Budget hotels can turn out basic food such as brochettes and rice, while the fancier hotels have pretty impressive menus at attractive prices.

Chez Venant (☎ 085-04115; Rue Rwamamba; mains RFr1500-5000) One of the few recommended restaurants in town, this place brings the taste of China to Huye. All the usual suspects turn up on the menu, including spring rolls and beef in black bean sauce, but there are also a few local dishes for good measure.

Hôtel Ibis Restaurant (☎ 530335; Rue de Kigali; meals RFr2500-5000) This hotel restaurant serves delicious food including a selection of meats, fish and pastas, and a wholesome range of salads. The pleasantly faded dining room here also brings a good measure of atmosphere to your dinner.

Entertainment

There is a traditional Rwandan dance troupe based near Huye, and their show is simply spectacular. The Intore dance originated in Burundi and involves elaborate costumes and superb drumming routines. Performances can be organised through the National Museum, and start at around RFr10,000 for up to five people. This is pretty good value for a group considering that photography is allowed (although not video). Note that prices substantially increase on weekends and during the evening. Contact the **museum** (☎ 532136) to book and confirm the dancers are in town, as the troupe is sometimes on tour.

Shopping

Expo Vente (Rue de Kigali) is a large handicrafts shop exhibiting local products made by cooperatives in villages around Huye.

Getting There & Away

There are several bus companies operating between Huye and Kigali (two hours) found on Rue de Kigali: Atraco Express, Okapi Car, Trans Express 2000 and Volcano Express have almost hourly services in both directions, costing around RFr2000. Atraco Express and Onatracom Express have a few daily departures to Cyangugu for around RFr1700.

Yahoo Car and New Yahoo Coach operate minibuses between Kigali and Bujumbura (Burundi) that stop in Huye at 9.30am daily. Minibuses from Huye (Butare) to Bujumbura cost RFr3000 to RFr5000. However, check security conditions very carefully before crossing this way. There are also local minibuses to the Burundi border at Kayanza Haut.

The minibus stand is just a patch of dirt situated about 1km north of the town centre, by the stadium. Arriving minibuses often drop passengers in the centre of town, but when leaving, you must go to the bus stand. *Boda-bodas* abound around town, so this is no problem.

Minibuses run between Huye and Kigali (RFr1400, two hours) and Kamembe (for Cyangugu, RFr1800, three hours) on a spectacular road in places, passing through the Parc National de Nyungwe, which contains some amazing virgin rainforest between Uwinka and Kiutabe.

AROUND HUYE

Gikongoro Genocide Memorial

Gikongoro would be a fairly forgettable town if it were not for the unforgettable horrors that took place here during the genocide. The location of a well-known technical college before the war, refugees flocked here in the hopes of seeking protection from their killers. As in Huye, the Interahamwe could not be stopped, and in a matter of days, thousands of people were brutally murdered.

This is by far the most graphic of the many genocide memorials in Rwanda, as hundreds of bodies have been exhumed, preserved with powdered lime and appear exactly as they did when the killers struck. Wandering through the rooms at this former institute of learning, the scene becomes more and more macabre, beginning with the contorted corpses of adults, and finishing with a room full of toddlers and babies, slashes from the machetes still visible on the shrivelled bodies.

As you can imagine from this description, Gikongoro can be overwhelming, and not everyone can stomach it for more than a few minutes. It is, however, another poignant reminder to all of us of what came to pass here, and why it must never be allowed to happen again.

Gikongoro is 28km west of Huye, and there are regular minibuses running between the two, costing around RFr500. The memorial is 2km beyond the town, and taxi-motors can run you there for a few hundred francs.

PARC NATIONAL DE NYUNGWE

Quite simply, Nyungwe is Rwanda's most important area of biodiversity, and has been rated the highest priority for forest conservation in Africa. While Nyungwe is the newest of Rwanda's parks to receive national park status, its protected area covers one of the oldest rainforests in Africa. Within the national park, you'll find no less than 1000 plant species including rare endemic orchids, 13 species of primates including more than 500 chimpanzees, 75 species of mammals, at least 275 species of birds and an astounding 120 species of butterflies.

Despite rivalling Uganda's Kibale Forest National Park (p475) in virtually every comparison, Nyungwe is little known outside of East Africa, and is largely undeveloped for tourism. Given its recent successes in promoting gorilla tourism on the international

market, the Rwandan government is presently mounting a strong campaign to swing the tourist circuit southwest to Nyungwe. While you're certainly going to need to make an effort to visit Nyungwe properly, you'll be rewarded tenfold for your efforts, and you may not see too many other tourists in the process.

Nyungwe's strongest drawcard is the chance to track chimpanzees, which have been habituated over the years to human visits. Hiking through equatorial rainforest in search of our closest living genetic ancestor is an unparalleled wildlife experience that is certainly on par with gorilla tracking. Little can prepare you for the experience of watching chimpanzees tumbling down from the canopy and racing along the forest floor, all the while being mesmerised by the sounds of their distinctive 'pant-hoot'.

While chimps tend to garner most of the spotlight in Nyungwe, the park's second billing is a habituated troop of around 400 Angolan colobus monkeys, the largest group of arboreal primates in all of Africa. The lush, green valleys of the rainforest also offer outstanding hiking across more than 20km of well-maintained trails, passing through enormous stands of hardwoods, under waterfalls and through large marshes.

History

Part of the Albertine Rift Valley, Nyungwe is virgin equatorial rainforest that survived the last Ice Age. As a result, it is one of the oldest green expanses on the African continent, and is something of a 'Lost World' for rare and endangered species. It also spans several altitudinal bands, which facilitates its largely unparalleled biodiversity of both flora and fauna.

As stunning as Nyungwe is in its present manifestation, it is sadly nothing but a poor shadow of its former grandeur. Today, the outskirts of Nyungwe are heavily cultivated with rolling tea plantations and lush banana plantations. Beautiful though they may be, agriculture to feed the burgeoning masses of the Great Lakes region is largely to blame for the past deforestation.

In the past 100 years, the rainforests of the Albertine Rift Valley were felled with little regard for the biodiversity that they harboured within. While Nyungwe received official protection under the Belgian colonial government

WATCHING WILDLIFE IN PARC NATIONAL DE NYUNGWE

Parc National de Nyungwe is an outstanding island of biodiversity, and a veritable monkey forest. At least 20% of the total primate species in Africa are found within the confines of Nyungwe, an impressive statistic that is only equalled by Kibale Forest National Park (p475) in Uganda.

While they're more difficult to track than slow-moving gorillas, communities of **chimpanzees** on the move will certainly make their presence known to you. Habituated troops of monkeys – **Angolan colobus** (troops of which number up to 400), **Dent's monkey** (a local race of blue monkey) and **grey-cheeked mangabeys** (the last two often seen together) – are virtually guaranteed on guided walks.

Other monkey possibilities include **l'Hoest's** and **diademed monkeys**, which sometimes associate with colobus and blue monkeys. **Olive baboons** and **vervet monkeys** loiter near the park's eastern edge, while **owl-faced monkeys** and possibly **golden monkeys** live in the extensive bamboo stands in the southeastern part of the reserve. Nocturnal prosimian attractions include **needle-clawed** and **greater galagos** as well as the **potto**.

In addition to primates, you also have a fairly good chance of spotting mammals, particularly in and around Kamiranzovu Marsh. **Marsh mongooses** and **Congo clawless otters** stick to the water's edge, while **giant forest hogs**, **bushpigs** and **duikers** are sometimes startled along the trails. Rainforest squirrels are also commonly spotted, and include **giant forest**, **montane sun** and **Boehm's bush squirrels**.

Hyraxes are easily heard after dark, though you're going to have to look inside the hollows of trees if you want to spot one. Nocturnal mammals are a bit tricky to spot, but you do have a chance of running across **jackals**, **civets** and **genets**.

Among bird-watchers in East Africa, Nyungwe has something of a legendary status, and is by far the country's top spot for bird watching. Even if you're not a hardcore birder, it's pretty easy to get excited by Nyungwe's 275-plus species, which include no less than 25 Albertine Rift Valley endemics.

The dirt road leading to Rangiro, and the Red, Blue and Kamiranzovu Trails are all highly recommended for bird-watching. The paved road through the park permits viewing at all levels of the forest: expect **mountain buzzards** and **cinnamon-chested bee-eaters** perched along here, plus numerous **sunbirds**, **wagtails** and flocks of **waxbills**. Other commonly sighted birds include **francolins**, **turacos**, **African crowned eagles**, **hornbills** and even **Congo bay owls**.

as early as 1933, it lost 15% of its original size in the 1960s and 1970s to encroaching farms.

Fortunately, the Peace Corps, the World Conservation Society and the Rwandan government targeted Nyungwe for increased conservation in the 1980s. The original project aims were to promote tourism in an ecologically sound way, while also studying the forest and educating local people about its value.

Although tourism in the region was brought to a standstill during the tragic events of the 1990s, Nyungwe Forest is once again firmly on the tourist map. Having received official national park status in 2004, Parc National de Nyungwe is now setting its sights on becoming one of East Africa's leading ecotourism destinations.

Orientation

One of the largest protected montane rainforests in Africa, Nyungwe covers 970 sq km, and extends across the border to Kibira National

Park in Burundi. It also serves as a watershed for Africa's two largest rivers, the Nile and the Congo, and contains several springs that are believed to feed the headwaters of the Albertine Nile.

Parc National de Nyungwe is sliced in two by the Huye–Cyangugu road. Visitors can access the park through either the Uwinka Reception Centre or the ORTPN Resthouse, both of which lie along this road.

Uwinka serves as an access point for the Coloured Trails, while the ORTPN Resthouse is the jumping off point for Waterfall Trail and the Gisakura tea estate. Chimpanzees can cover great distances in a short period of time, so you need to inquire at either Uwinka or ORTPN about their whereabouts.

While public transportation does pass by the park, your ability to move around the park will be greatly restricted without access to a private vehicle. This is especially true if

you want to see the chimps, as tracking can sometimes begin in the most seemingly random of locations.

Information

The park headquarters is at the Uwinka Reception Centre, where you must pay your visitor fees. It costs US\$20 per day to enter Nyungwe, though you will need to pay additional fees depending on which activities you decide to engage in.

Chimpanzee tracking costs an additional US\$50 per person, while all other guided walks cost an additional US\$30 per person. It is also standard practice (and good manners) to tip your guides, especially if they do a good job tracking the primates. Note that unguided walks are not permitted in the park.

Sights & Activities

While it should go without saying, Nyungwe is equatorial rainforest, which means that it receives more than 2 metres of rainfall annually. This of course means that you need to dress appropriately – trails can get extremely wet and muddy, so make sure you have good hiking shoes, waterproof slacks, a solid raincoat and perhaps even a floppy hat or bandana.

CHIMPANZEE TRACKING

They may pale in size when compared to the hulking masses that are the eastern mountain gorillas, though there is no denying the incredible affinity that we humans have for chimpanzees. Sharing an estimated 94% of our genetic material, chimps display an incredible range of human-like behaviours ranging from tool use and waging war to face-to-face sex and possibly even rudimentary language.

Chimps are highly sociable creatures, and one of the few primates to form complex communities ranging upwards of 100 individuals. During the day, these communities break down into smaller units that forage for food, a behaviour that has been dubbed by anthropologists as ‘fission-fusion’. Since they cover a greater daily distance than the relatively docile gorilla, chimpanzee tracking is a much more uncertain enterprise.

Chimpanzee habitation in Nyungwe is still very much a work in progress, and there are no guarantees that you’ll come face-to-face with one in the wild. However, you’ll certainly be aware of their presence – they’re very

sensitive to territorial intrusions – especially since their distinctive ‘pant-hoot’ is one of the most distinctive sounds of the Central African rainforest.

If you are lucky, and happen to come across a group of chimps on the move, you need to be quick with the camera. Chimps do have a tendency to quickly disappear in the underbrush, or climb up into the canopy and out of sight. On the other hand, consider leaving the camera in your backpack for a few extra moments, and enjoying the privileged position you’re in of being able to encounter mankind’s closest living evolutionary link.

Much like gorilla tracking, you need to be prepared for lengthy and taxing hikes that can take up to several hours. Of course, it’s certainly worth the effort – chimps are an endangered species that are becoming increasingly rare in the wild. Even if your efforts aren’t successful, hiking through Nyungwe is still an amazing experience in and of itself.

As previously mentioned, chimpanzees have large day ranges, which means that you need to inquire with the rangers as to their general whereabouts. In the rainy season, you have a good chance of successfully tracking the chimps on the Coloured Trails (p582), though in the dry season they have a tendency to head for higher elevations. Given their mobility, having a car is something of a necessity for chimp tracking as you will need to arrange transportation for you and your guide to the trailhead.

If the chimps have moved deep into the forest, note that a second locale for tracking exists in nearby **Cyamudongo**, which is protected as an annexe of Parc National de Nyungwe. This tiny patch of forest, located approximately 45 minutes west of Gisakura on the road out to Cyangungu, covers no more than 6 sq km, though it is home to an estimated 20 chimps. Again, that you need to have your own vehicle in order to consider Cyamudongo a viable option.

COLOBUS MONKEY TRACKING

A subspecies of the widespread black-and-white colobus, the Angolan colobus is an arboreal Old World monkey that is distinguished by its black fur and long, silky white locks of hair. Weighing 10 to 20kg, and possessing a dextrous tail that can reach lengths of 75 centimetres, Angolan colobi are perfectly suited to a life up in the canopy.

Colobi are distributed throughout the rainforests of equatorial Africa, though they reach epic numbers in Parc National de Nyungwe. While they may not be as charismatic as chimps, colobi are extremely social primates that form enormous group sizes – the semi-habituated troop in Nyungwe numbers no less than 400 individuals, and is by far the largest primate aggregation on the continent.

As you might imagine, finding yourself in the presence of literally hundreds of primates bounding through the treetops can be a mesmerising experience. Curious animals by nature, colobi in Nyungwe seem to almost revel in their playful interactions with human visitors.

Troops of Angolan colobi maintain fairly regimented territories, which is good news for trackers as the semi-habituated group in Nyungwe tends to stick to the Coloured Trails (below). While watching wildlife is never a certainty, generally speaking, the rangers can find the colobus monkey troop in an hour or so.

COLOURED TRAILS

This system of marked trails was constructed in the late 1980s in an attempt to open up Nyungwe to tourists. While tourism in the national park remains relatively low-key, these seven trails are nevertheless reasonably well maintained. Hikers can choose from the 1km-long Grey Trail, a proverbial walk in the woods, up to the 10km-long Red Trail, which winds steeply up forested-slopes.

Although you need to specifically request to engage in either chimpanzee or colobus tracking, in theory you could run across either primate while hiking the coloured trails. Even if you don't come across these two star billings, you're likely to spot any of Nyungwe's other 11 primates, as well as a whole slew of birdlife, and possibly even the odd mammal or two.

The trails originate from the Uwinka Reception Centre.

WATERFALL TRAIL

While not as popular as the Coloured Trails, this stunner of a hike is one of the highlights of Nyungwe. Departing from the ORTPN Resthouse, the Waterfall Trail takes three to six hours to complete depending on your fitness level, and winds through a variety of landscapes from tea plantations to deep forest. The highlight of the trail is (quite obviously) a

remote waterfall, where you can take a shallow dip and refresh your body after a potentially hot and humid hike.

GISAKURA TEA PLANTATION

Another interesting hike leads from the ORTPN Resthouse to this nearby tea plantation, which is home to a small group of semi-habituated Angolan colobus monkeys. The forest fringes around the tea plantation are also a particularly good area for bird watching, so bring your binoculars if you want to raise your bird count.

KAMIRANZOVU TRAIL

If you have your own wheels, this wilderness trail starts somewhere between Uwinka and Gisakura, and runs for about 4km to Kamiranzovu Swamp. Sadly, elephants haven't been seen in the area for decades, though the swamplands are your best bet for spotting other large mammals. Even if you don't come across any other fauna, this trail is particularly famous for its rare species of orchids.

BIGUGU TRAIL

While you need to be in good shape to attempt this trail, the route up to Mt Bigugu (2950m) puts you in the proximity of a freshwater spring that is reported to be the most remote source of the Nile River. The trailhead lies along the road between Uwinka and Huye.

RANGIRO ROAD

This dirt road starts 1.5km east of Uwinka, and is by far the best place in the park for bird watching. Since there are frequent changes in elevation along this route, you have increased chances of spotting a good number of Nyungwe's fine-feathered friends. There are more than 25 endemics in the park including Rwenzori turacos as well as other large forest specialties including African crowned eagles and various hornbills.

Sleeping & Eating

There is a **camp site** (per person US\$20) at the Uwinka headquarters, occupying a ridge (2500m) overlooking the forest, that offers impressive views in all directions. Campers should bring pretty much everything they need – tent, sleeping bag, cooking equipment, food and warm clothes – as only drinks are available, and there is little here other than toilets, charcoal and wood. The nearest towns for

provisions are Cyangugu (below), Gikongoro (p579) and Huye (Butare; p576).

A more sophisticated option for those without a tent is the **ORTPN Resthouse** (r per person \$15-20, meals US\$5-10), which offers accommodation in simple but functional rooms that share communal showers and toilets. With advanced notice, you can also arrange for the staff to cook you hot meals. The big problem, however, is location, location, location – it is a long haul to Uwinka for those with no transport, though you are close to the Waterfall Trail and the Gisakura Tea Plantation. Note that advance bookings are recommended, and can be made through the ORTPN office in Kigali – see p551.

Getting There & Away

Parc National de Nyungwe lies between Huye and Cyangugu, and minibuses travel between Huye (90km, two hours. RFr1000) and Kamembe (for Cyangugu, 54km, one hour) throughout the day.

Hitching rides back and forth is certainly possible for the patient, though your ability to move around the park is severely limited if you don't have a car. This is especially true if you're planning on tracking chimpanzees since the hike usually begins in random locales. If you're sticking to the Coloured Trails, however, it is easy enough to base yourself at Uwinka.

The Uwinka headquarters is well marked with a picture of a colobus monkey. If you're coming in from Kigali, the trip takes between four and five hours depending on traffic.

CYANGUGU

Clinging to the southern tip of Lake Kivu, and looking across to Bukavu in DRC, Cyangugu is an attractively situated town on the shore. It is also the nearest major settlement to Parc National de Nyungwe, one of the richest primate destinations in Africa. Despite these two major drawcards, Cyangugu is a relatively low-key tourist destination; you'll certainly enjoy the peace and quiet if you happen to spend the night here.

Orientation & Information

Kamembe, a few kilometres above the lake, is the main town and transport centre and an important location for the processing of tea and cotton, while most of the better hotels are down below in Cyangugu proper, right next to the border.

There is a branch of BCR in Kamembe that changes cash, but for Congolese transactions, it is better to change near the border post in Cyangugu. Anyone planning to travel on to DRC can obtain an eight-day visa on the border for US\$35, though Bukavu has experienced more unrest than most eastern towns – check carefully, and then check again before crossing.

Sights & Activities

Most visitors to Cyangugu are content with simply taking a dip in **Lake Kivu**, lounging on the shores or exploring the town on foot. If however you're feeling a bit more active, consider an excursion to nearby Parc National de Nyungwe (p579).

Sleeping & Eating

Peace Guesthouse (☎ 537799; www.asp78.dsl.pipex.com; r RFr3000-6000, cabin/villa RFr20,000/30,000) It's situated kind of in the middle of nowhere, but that's the point. Run by the Anglican Church, the most popular option on this stretch of the lake is more or less equidistant from Kamembe and Cyangugu, though the view faces firmly towards Bukavu in DRC. The management is extremely keen on tending to the needs of their guests, and you won't find much to complain about as the rooms and private villas are all kept in immaculate order.

Hotel des Chutes (☎ 537405; r RFr8000-10,000) Situated back on the hill, this hotel offers well-equipped rooms with spacious balconies that boast fine views of the lake. There is also a great little restaurant here with a range of European cuisine available, as well as a bar and outdoor terrace that is popular with the locals.

Ten to Ten Paradise Hotel (☎ 537818; r RFr12,000-20,000; 📶) Located up in more rough-and-ready Kamembe, this is the wishest hotel in town, boasting modern amenities such as air-con, satellite TV, steamy hot water showers. However, putting charm above comfort, you are better off down in Cyangugu.

Hotel du Lac (☎ 537172; r RFr12,000-20,000; 📶) So close to the border it's almost in DRC, this local landmark has a good mix of rooms, even though some of them have aged gracefully over the years. The swimming pool is open to non-guests for a small fee, and the lively terrace bar and restaurant is the place to be at night.

The most popular eating spots in town are at the hotel restaurants – any of the listings above are certainly worth checking out, even if you're not staying there. Another good option is to check out the hole-in-the-wall local restaurants up in Kamembe close to the bus terminal, which can provide a quick snack before or after a bus journey.

Getting There & Away

Minibuses for the short hop between Cyangugu and Kamembe cost RFr200.

Atraco Express and Onatracom Express have several daily departures between them to Huye (Butare) for around RFr1700 (three hours). This road is incredibly spectacular in parts and passes through the superb Nyungwe rainforest, where it is possible to see troops of Angolan colobus playing by the roadside.

See opposite for details on the daily bus service connecting Cyangugu and Kibuye, and for information on boat transportation across Lake Kivu.

KIBUYE

Although it has a stunning location, spread across a series of tongues jutting into Lake Kivu, Kibuye is not quite able to rival Gisenyi for the title of Rwanda's leading destination for sun and sand. On this part of the lake, good beaches are a lot less common, and it doesn't help that Kibuye hosted the largest wholesale slaughter of Tutsis during the dark days of the genocide.

However, a new paved road from Kigali has made the town more accessible than ever before, and it may only be a matter of time before tourism development starts to pick up. In the meantime, Kibuye is certainly a pleasant enough place to relax for a few days. And, unlike Gisenyi, you can swim here without fear of drowning and asphyxiating in the event of an unforeseen limnic eruption (see the boxed text p574).

History

During the 100 days of madness in 1994, Kibuye hosted some of the most horrific and despicable mass killings in all of Rwanda. Prior to the outbreak of the genocide, more than 20% of the local population was Tutsi; in 1994 the Interahamwe killed an estimated nine out of every 10 Tutsi. While these scars still run deep, today the residents of Kibuye are working together as a community to em-

brace the prospect of future tourism. A couple of memorials to the slain victims ensure that the past is not forgotten, while the frames of new buildings are sights of a brighter future.

Orientation & Information

Kibuye may not be as developed as Gisenyi (p572), but it is nevertheless an extremely pleasant place to explore. One of the best ways to get accustomed to the town is to follow the ring road around the shores of the lake. There are some amazing views to be had along the way, and you're likely to find a few sandy patches where you can pause to take a cooling dip.

There is a post office near Guest House Kibuye with international services, plus plenty of MTN phones in the centre of town. For internet access, try **Hotel Centre Béthanie** (☎ 568509; per hr RFr500).

Sights

GENOCIDE MEMORIALS

Kibuye was hardest hit of all prefectures during the killings, with about 90% of the Tutsi population murdered. To help ensure no one forgets the horrors that were perpetrated here in 1994, there is a genocide memorial in the **church** near Hôme St Jean. While a good number of memorials in Rwanda are stark reminders of the past atrocities, the church is a beautiful and evocative testament to the strength of the human spirit. The interior is adorned with colourful mosaics, vivid stained glass windows and flowing tapestries, each of which pays solemn tribute to the memory of lost loved ones.

The uphill road from Kibuye leads to the small village of **Bisesero**, which is home to an equally significant memorial. During the early days of the genocide, more than 50,000 Tutsis fled here in the hope of evading the Interahamwe. For more than a month, these brave individuals were able to fend off their aggressors with little more than basic farming implements.

On May 13, a reinforced regiment of soldiers and militia descended on Bisesero, slaughtering more than half of the refugees. By the time the French arrived on the scene in June, there were no more than 1300 Tutsis remaining. However, these individuals overcame insurmountable odds, and their stories of reflect humanity's incredible will to survive.

OTHER SIGHTS

There is a busy **market** on the lakeshore on Fridays which attracts traders from as far afield as DRC.

When returning on the road to Kigali, keep an eye out for the 100m-high waterfall **Les Chutes de Ndaba** after about 20km – buses usually slow down and helpful locals are quick to point it out.

Activities

Not surprisingly, most activities in Kibuye revolve around Lake Kivu. Most guests are content to simply sun themselves for days on end, occasionally taking breaks to go **swimming**. The other popular activity is **boating** to any of the small offshore islands, which can be arranged through any of the accommodation options listed below.

Sleeping & Eating

Hôte St Jean (☎ 568526; r RFr3500-6500) Sitting on an isolated hillside to the west of town, this church-run pad has great views and the rooms are some of the cheapest in town. For those without transport, it means a lot of walking, though you'll be rewarded for your efforts with a good measure of peace and tranquillity.

Hotel Centre Béthanie (☎ 568509; r RFr8000-12,000; 📍) Another church-run spot, this popular guesthouse occupies a charming location on a wooded peninsula jutting into the lake. The small but cosy private rooms are kept spic and span, and there is also a basic restaurant on the premises, as well as internet access. It's wise to give a ring before stopping by as this is Kibuye's leading conference venue.

Hotel Golfe Eden Rock (☎ 568524; r from RFr14,000) This large and looming hotel is open to the public once more, having housed the Chinese road-construction crew working on the Kigali road for many years. The location is not as nice as Bethanie, but the rooms are far and above the smartest in town. The most expensive quarters come equipped with private balconies, which offer sweeping views over Lake Kivu.

Restaurant Nouveauté (meals RFr1000-4000) This place, in the centre of town near Okapi Car, has a basic menu of goat stew or brochettes, beans, rice, potatoes and so on. It also offers cold beers and soft drinks, and attracts a small but devoted crowd of locals in the evening hours.

Getting There & Away

The road linking Kibuye with Kigali is endlessly winding but in excellent shape, making it very accessible from the capital. Okapi Car runs a handful of daily buses between Kigali and Kibuye (2½ hours), costing around RFr1500. Local minibuses also run this way for a little less, but are much more crowded.

Getting between Kibuye and either Cyangugu or Gisenyi is more difficult without your own vehicle as shared taxis and buses are very infrequent. There is a daily morning bus in either direction between Kibuye and Cyangugu (RFr2500, six hours) which involves one of the most spectacular roads in the country, complete with hairpin bends and plunging drops. There are infrequent minibuses to Gisenyi charging RFr1500. Friday is generally the easiest day for heading north or south, due to the market.

At the time of writing, there were no regularly scheduled ferry services currently in operation on Lake Kivu. However, it is sometimes possible to arrange a boat trip to Gisenyi or Cyangugu if there is enough demand – inquire at your accommodation for more information. Note that due to the ongoing instability in DRC, international boat trips are of questionable safety.

EASTERN RWANDA

While much of Rwanda is characterised by equatorial rainforest and richly cultivated farmland, Eastern Rwanda is something else entirely. Contiguous with the dry and flat savannah lands of Tanzania, this region is more reminiscent of the classic images of East African landscapes. While sights are scarce in this part of the country, Parc National de l'Akagera is one of Rwanda's highlights, especially if you're looking to get your safari fix.

PARC NATIONAL DE L'AKAGERA

Created in 1934 to protect the lands surrounding the Kagera River, this national park once protected nearly 10% of Rwanda, and was considered to be one of the finest game reserves in the whole of Africa. However, due to the massive numbers of refugees who returned to Rwanda in the late 1990s, as much as two-thirds of the park was

de-gazetted, and resettled with new villages. Increased human presence took an incredible toll on the national park. Human encroachment facilitated poaching and environmental degradation, and Akagera's wildlife was very nearly decimated.

For more than a decade, Akagera was something of a vegetarian safari, given that most animals on four legs were taking an extended holiday in neighbouring Tanzania. However, the Rwandan government has recently implemented strict conservation laws (which are certainly complementary to their increased push for tourism in Rwanda) aimed at protecting Akagera. Furthermore, the once decrepit Akagera Game Lodge has been rehabilitated by South African investors, and now stands as testament to the future potential of this once great safari park.

Truth be told, Akagera is still a shadow of its former self, and you will be extremely disappointed if you come here expecting concentrations of wildlife on par with Kenya and Tanzania. While the once grand herds that characterised Akagera are a mere fraction of their original numbers, populations are noticeably on the rise. And, even if you don't come across too many wild animals, it's very likely that you won't come across too many other wildlife-viewing drivers. Indeed, the tourist trail has yet to fully incorporate Akagera, which means that you can soak up the park's splendid nature in relative peace and isolation.

History

Akagera's strongest drawcard is its unique ecology, which is a mix of woodland habitats, swampy wetlands and jagged mountains. For much of its natural history, Akagera functioned as a self-sustaining ecological unit, which enabled a significant number of animals to survive year-round without the need to migrate out of the area. While the Belgians certainly didn't do Rwanda too many favours, they are credited with recognising the environmental significance of Akagera.

In 1934, the colonial government gazetted 2500 sq km as protected lands, including a buffer zone where human activities were strictly prohibited. Following independence in 1962, the Rwandan government largely upheld their commitment to protect the sanctity of the national park. In fact, prior to the start

of the civil war, Akagera, together with the country's other national parks, was Rwanda's third largest revenue earner.

As history would have it, in 1997 Akagera was reduced to a mere 1085 sq km due to increased population pressures brought on by returning refugees. In an effort to resettle landless Rwandans, the government slashed the park's borders by two-thirds, devastating this once pristine ecosystem.

In response to substantial habitat loss, as well as depleted water supplies resulting from increased farming and ranching, Akagera's wildlife fled to Tanzania. Poachers, who carried out their illegal activities with virtual impunity, quickly decimated the animal herds that chose to stay put. In more recent years, the Rwandan government has changed its tune on Akagera, though it's going to take several more years before wildlife populations in the park can stabilise.

While human and wildlife conflicts are never a clear-cut issue, it's worth pointing out that Akagera is a vital part of Rwanda's push for a viable tourism industry. At present, the vast majority of tourists in Rwanda leave the country quickly after tracking gorillas, which is a trend the government would like to change. If people can be persuaded to spend a bit of extra time in Rwanda, then Akagera, along with Parc National de Nyungwe (p579), need to be preserved.

On that note, consider extending your stay in Rwanda, and be sure to visit Akagera – this up-and-coming national park could certainly use your support.

Orientation

There are three distinct environments in the park: standard savannah as seen in much of the region; an immense swampy area along the border with Tanzania that contains six lakes and numerous islands, some of which are covered with forest; and a chain of low mountains on the flanks of the park with variable vegetation, ranging from short grasses on the summits to wooded savannah and dense thickets of forest.

The best time to visit is during the dry season (mid-May to September). November and April are the wettest months. Tsetse flies and mosquitoes can be bad in the north and east, so bring a good insect repellent.

While in theory it is possible to reach the park by public transport, you really do need

a private vehicle in order to move around the park.

Hiring a guide is a good idea, especially since the trails aren't that well marked. Plus it will help give the rangers some extra encouragement, which certainly goes a long way in helping to protect this vital national park.

Information

Parc Arc National de L'Akagera has a really, really confusing fee structure, so just bear with us for a few lines.

Admission for foreigners is US\$10 – this is a one-off fee that covers your entire time in the park. There is also a one-off vehicle levy fee, which is US\$4 to US\$20 for locally registered vehicles, and US\$10 to US\$50 for foreigner registered vehicles; small 4WD vehicles incur a smaller charge than large trucks. On top of all of this, you need to pay a wildlife viewing fee – for non-resident foreigners, a one-/two-/three-day pass is US\$20/30/50, while resident foreigners need only pay US\$15/20/25.

Yes, this is annoying, and yes, it can add up to of money. However, keep in mind that the fees you pay to visit Akagera are essential to keeping the park operating at its top capacity.

Sights & Activities

WILDLIFE WATCHING

Akagera is home to the greatest diversity of large mammals in Rwanda, including recovering herds of buffalo, topi, plains zebras, impalas, elands, giraffes, reedbucks, waterbucks, elephants and sitatungas. The parks' vegetated waterways are inhabited by vast numbers of hippos and crocodiles – while you should never exit your car in a wildlife reserve, this adage holds doubly true near any source of water.

Carnivores in Akagera include lions, leopards, spotted hyenas, genets, cervals and jackals. There are even a few specialties, including the rare roan antelope and reintroduced black rhinos from Tanzania. The national park also lies on the great Nile Valley bird migration route, which means that you could potentially spot up to 525 species of birds including several endemics and more than 40 different kinds of raptors.

Again, it's worth pointing out that while Akagera supports a full compliment of East African wildlife, don't come here expecting

your quintessential East Africa safari experience. Wildlife populations are only now starting to stabilise, but in time, Akagera has the potential to once again rank among the continent's great safari parks.

So how much wildlife is actually left in the park? That's the real question, though nobody truly knows the answer with any degree of certainty. There may only be one or two dozen lions left in the park, though hyenas, jackals and leopards are still active at night, and small cats such as the genet and serval are well represented. Since Akagera is contiguous with western Tanzania, there is hope that predatory cats will increase their ranges and move into Rwanda.

Akagera was once defined by its massive aggregates of herd animals and there is reason to believe that these densities will arise once more. There are no less than 11 different species of antelopes in the park, which includes the common safari staple that is the impala, as well as the majestic but rare roan antelope. Buffalo and zebra are also very well represented animals, while Maasai giraffes and elephants are making a slow but steady comeback.

The national park is also something of a hippo paradise, especially given that much of the environment is swampland. There are at least a thousand of the lumbering giants in and around the shores of the lake, as well as a large enough population of crocs to keep you from the temptation of taking a cooling dip.

In the 1950s, Akagera was the first national park in Africa to receive translocated black rhinos, which were flown in from neighbouring Tanzania. These animals thrived in the dense brush of the park, but poachers quickly decimated their numbers during the 1980s. At present, it is believed that there are still a few remaining individuals, and there are plans underway to translocate more of these highly endangered animals.

If you're a bird-watcher, you'll be happy to know that Akagera has Rwanda's greatest concentration of fine-feathered friends outside of Parc National de Nyungwe (p579). The many kilometres of waterside habitat support African eagles, kingfishers, herons, ibises, storks, egrets, crakes, rails, cormorants, darts and pelicans. Seasonal visitors include large flocks of ducks, bee-eaters and terns, and the woodlands areas are particularly good places for barbets, shrikes, orioles and weavers.

Sleeping

Akagera Game Lodge (☎ 567805; www.akageralodge.co.rw; r from US\$150; 🏠) Great news for those on an upmarket safari in the region, the Akagera Lodge offers four-star comfort for park visitors. Fully renovated by a South African group, this is really more of an upscale hotel than a luxury wildlife lodge, though it's still an excellent base for properly exploring Akagera. Full-board deals are available, a wise choice given there are no restaurants in the park; day-trippers should head here for lunch.

Camping (adult/child US\$10/5) is possible at the park headquarters on the shores of Lake Ihema, but more attractive is the second, basic camp site at Lake Shakani, a few kilometres north. At either place facilities are so minimal as to be verging on non-existent, so be sure that you're prepared to be virtually self-sufficient.

Getting There & Away

Akagera is only really accessible for those with their own transport. Safari and tour companies in Kigali can arrange a vehicle (see p552), or you can negotiate with private taxis around Kigali.

RWANDA DIRECTORY

ACCOMMODATION

Camping

The only fully functioning camp sites in the country are at Parc National de Nyungwe (p579) and Parc National de l'Akagera (p585), but it may be possible to camp at some of the missions around the country on request. Note that facilities are non-existent here, which means that you will need to bring everything with you and be entirely self-sufficient.

Hostels

Dorm accommodation at the mission hostels costs a couple thousand francs per night without food, while a private double room can run as high as RFr15,000 per night depending on facilities. Bathrooms are generally shared.

Mission hostels are places run by churches or missionaries. These differ from ordinary places in that few foreigners stay at them, and the hostels usually enforce a curfew – the door is usually closed at 10pm (or earlier). They seem to attract an exceptionally conscientious type of manager who takes the old adage 'clean-

PRACTICALITIES

- Rwanda uses the metric system and distances are in kilometres.
- Electricity in Rwanda is 240V, 50 cycles, and plugs are mainly two-pin.
- The English-language *New Times* is published several times a week, plus the Ugandan *New Vision* and *Monitor* are also available. French magazines and international titles are available in Kigali.
- Radio Rwanda is the government-run station, broadcasting in Kinyarwanda, French, Swahili and English.
- TV Rwandaise (TVR) is the state-owned broadcaster.

liness is next to godliness' fairly seriously – there might not be hot water, but the bed and room will be spotless. Note that couples may be separated unless obviously married.

Hotels

Compared with mission hostels, hotels are generally a bit more expensive, though you can usually expect satellite TV, hot showers and occasionally internet access.

Top-end hotels, mostly found in Kigali and Gisenyi, adhere to international standards of quality and service. Some of the newer, smaller places offer better value for money, and more character than the larger international chains. There are also now a couple of upmarket camps located near Musanze (Ruhengeri; p559) on the edge of Parc National des Volcans.

ACTIVITIES

Bird-Watching

Bird-watching in Rwanda may not be in the same league as the rest of East Africa, but there are some good opportunities for ornithologists in Parc National de Nyungwe (p579), where a host of Albertine Rift endemics can be seen. Another decent spot is Parc National de l'Akagera (p585), in the east of the country, which offers an alternative range of savannah birds.

Hiking & Trekking

Trekking is beginning to take off again in Rwanda. As the waiting list for gorilla permits grows longer in peak season, more and more

travellers are taking the opportunity to climb and trek the volcanoes in Parc National des Volcans (p562). There is also an excellent network of walking trails at Parc National de Nyungwe (p579), the largest tropical montane forest in East Africa.

Primate Tracking

Without a doubt, this forms the number-one attraction for all visitors to Rwanda: an encounter with the enigmatic mountain gorillas is simply magical. It's possible to track the mountain gorillas in Parc National des Volcans (p562) throughout the year. Bookings should be made with the ORTPN office (p551) in Kigali. For more information on tracking the mountain gorillas in East Africa, see p75.

While not as popular as the gorillas, endangered golden monkeys can also be tracked in Parc National des Volcans – for more information, see p568.

Chimpanzee tracking is beginning to take off at Nyungwe (p579), though sightings are not as common as in Uganda as habituation is still ongoing. There are also huge troops of colobus monkeys in Nyungwe that are easy to spot from the well-marked walking trails that cut through the forest.

Wildlife Watching

The only opportunity for wildlife drives is in Parc National de l'Akagera (p585), though with wildlife numbers still recovering from years of conflict, it is not quite the Kenya or Tanzania experience yet.

BOOKS

Many of the most powerful books written about Rwanda cover the tragedy of the 1994 genocide. For an in-depth insight into the Rwandan genocide, read *The Rwanda Crisis – History of a Genocide* by French historian Gerard Prunier.

One of the most hard-hitting books on the genocide is *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families* by Phillip Gourevitch.

Another journalist who bore witness to much of the killing was BBC correspondent Fergal Keane, who returned to write *Season of Blood*.

Shake Hands With the Devil by Lt Gen Romeo Dallaire tells the inside story of the UN mission in Rwanda.

Leave None to Tell the Story, published by African Rights Watch, is a meticulous record of the genocide through the eyes of victims who survived, and government records, which attest to the clinical planning of it all.

A Sunday by the Pool in Kigali by Gil Courtemanche is a fictional account of a relationship between a French reporter and a beautiful Tutsi woman during the genocide. No doubt based on very real events, this is an ill-fated love story that perfectly captures the horrors of the time.

Gorillas in the Mist by Dian Fossey is another classic – see p564 for more background.

BUSINESS HOURS

Government offices and businesses are generally open between 8.30am and 4.30pm or 5.30pm, with a short break for lunch sometime between noon and 2pm. Most shops and banks do not break for lunch, but some banks close early at 3.30pm.

Local restaurant hours are 7am to 9pm, and international-type restaurants are open 11.30am to 2.30pm and 5.30pm to 10.30pm Monday to Friday.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Mention Rwanda to most people and they think of it as a highly dangerous place. However, the reality today is very different, and stability has returned to all parts of the country.

With that said, it is still worth checking security conditions before entering the country as it is a very unstable region of the world. There is always the remote possibility of Interahamwe rebels re-entering the country, or problems spilling over from neighbouring DRC or Burundi.

The most important, and vital, thing to remember about security is that there is absolutely no substitute for researching current conditions in the country and surrounding neighbours before arrival and again once in the country. Read newspapers, ask other travellers and hostels for the latest and check again locally once in the provinces. Things can change very fast, for the better or worse, and it pays to be well informed.

Urban Rwanda is undoubtedly one of the safer places to be in this region, and Kigali is a genuine contender for the safest capital in Africa. However, like in any big city the world over, take care at night.

Out in the countryside, do not walk along anything other than a well-used track – there may still be land mines in some remote areas, though most have now been cleared by international organisations.

Never take photographs of anything connected with the government or the military (post offices, banks, bridges, border crossings, barracks, prisons and dams) – cameras can and will be confiscated. In fact, take care of where you point your camera anywhere in the country, as most Rwandans are very sensitive to who or what you are snapping.

The most common annoyance here are the roadblocks on all of the main roads, particularly close to the capital Kigali. Vehicles must stop at these, and passengers and their baggage may be searched. On roads near borders, soldiers will also want to check passports and travel documents.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

Rwandan Embassies

For Rwandan embassies in Burundi, Kenya, Tanzania or Uganda, see the relevant section in those chapters. Useful Rwandan embassies worldwide:

Belgium (☎ 02-771 2127; 1 Ave de Fleurs, Brussels)
South Africa (☎ 012-460 0709; 35 Marais St, Pretoria)
UK (☎ 020-7224 9832; 120-122 Seymour Place, London)
USA (☎ 202-232 2882; www.rwandaembassy.org; 1724 New Hampshire Ave, Washington DC)

Embassies in Rwanda

All embassies and consulates are in the capital, Kigali. Quite a number of embassies are now located on Blvd de l'Umuganda, across the valley in the Kacyiru suburb of Kigali.

Belgium (Map p550; ☎ 575551; www.diplomatie.be/kigali; Rue de Nyarugenge)
Burundi (off Map p550; ☎ 517529; Boulevard de l'Umuganda, Kacyiru)
Canada (Map p550; ☎ 571762; Rue de l'Akagera)
France (Map p550; ☎ 575206; 40 Ave Paul VI)
Kenya (off Map p550; ☎ 583332; Blvd de l'Umuganda, Kacyiru)
South Africa (off Map p550; ☎ 583185; Blvd de l'Umuganda, Kacyiru)
Tanzania (Map p550; ☎ 756567; tanzarep@rwandatell.rwanda.com; 15 Ave Paul VI, Kigali)
Uganda (Map p550; ☎ 503537; http://ugandaembassy.rw; Ave de la Paix)
UK (off Map p550; ☎ 585280; Blvd de l'Umuganda)
USA (Map p550; ☎ 596400; http://rwanda.usembassy.gov; 2657 Ave de la Gendarmerie, Kacyiru)

HOLIDAYS

New Year's Day 1 January
Democracy Day 8 January
Easter (Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter Monday) March/April
Labour Day 1 May
Ascension Thursday May
Whit Monday May
National Day 1 July
Peace & National Unity Day 5 July
Harvest Festival 1 August
Assumption 15 August
Culture Day 8 September
Kamarampaka Day 25 September
Armed Forces Day 26 October
All Saints' Day 1 November
Christmas Day 25 December

For information on Kwita Izina, the gorilla naming ceremony, see the box text on p570.

INTERNET ACCESS

Internet access in Rwanda is up to regional standards, and is now widely available in Kigali, as well as on a more limited basis in Gisenyi, Huye (Butare), Cyangugu, Kibuye and Musanze (Ruhengeri). It is cheap, generally between RFr500 and RFr1000 per hour.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Rwanda doesn't have a huge presence in cyberspace, but there are a few useful websites to keep an eye out for:

International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda

(www.ict.rw) The official website for the genocide trials taking place in Arusha.

New Times (www.newtimes.co.rw) For the latest news on Rwanda in English.

Tourism in Rwanda (www.rwandatourism.com) The official tourist website on Rwanda, with information on national parks and local culture.

MAPS

It's difficult to get hold of decent maps of Rwanda before getting to the country. The best map currently is *Rwanda Burundi - International Travel Map* by ITMB Publishing at a scale of 1:400,000. Once in Kigali, it may be possible to buy older maps of some of the national parks from the ORTPN office or from local bookshops. You may also find it useful to get hold of *Tanzania - Rwanda - Burundi Map* by Nelles.

MONEY

The unit of currency is the Rwandan franc (RFr). It is divided into 100 centimes, but these are no longer in circulation. Notes come in RFr100, RFr500, RFr1000, RFr5000 and RFr10,000 denominations. Coins come in RFr1, RFr5, RFr10, RFr20 and RFr50.

ATMs

Banks in Kigali have a network of ATMs, but they are not yet wired up for international transactions (despite the Visa signs at some.) Ask locals on arrival for the latest information, rather than wandering the city from ATM to ATM, experiencing disappointment and frustration.

There is still a bit of a black market in Rwanda, but there is not much difference in the rate offered on the street and in banks and forex places. Moneychangers gather around the main post office in Kigali, but count your cash very carefully if you change on the street.

Cash

You'll find it is definitely best to come to Rwanda with US dollars or euros as travellers cheques and credit-card withdrawals attract a hefty commission, and rates against other currencies are poor. There are a number of banks open in Kigali, but some can be very slow at dealing with currency exchange. There are also banks in Huye (Butare), Cyangugu, Gisenyi, Gitarama and Musanze (Ruhengeri). Another option is to change cash on the street or in shops, but note that this usually attracts a slightly higher rate than elsewhere, particularly for non-US currencies.

Credit Cards

Credit cards are generally only accepted in relatively expensive hotels and restaurants in Kigali, Gisenyi and Musanze (Ruhengeri). It is possible to make cash withdrawals against credit cards at banks in the capital, though you can expect to pay a hefty commission and lose a lot of time waiting for everything to clear.

Tipping

Tipping is common in the cities these days due to the large international presence. Rwandan salaries are low and a tip of about 10% will be appreciated.

Travellers Cheques

Travellers cheques draw commissions adding up to about US\$15 per transaction, so it is well worth changing all the money you'll need in one go. Generally speaking however, your travellers cheques are useless beyond the capital.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Be extremely careful wherever you take photos in Rwanda; see p589.

You may also be able to find memory cards and other accessories for digital cameras in cities and large towns, but prices are high, and quality is not guaranteed.

POST

Postal rates for postcards going overseas are around RFr200 for Africa, RFr250 for Europe and North America and RFr300 elsewhere. There is a poste restante facility at the post office (p551) in Kigali.

TELEPHONE

There are two main operators in Rwanda, MTN and Rwandatel. International calls are relatively expensive at RFr500 to RFr1000 per minute to most countries including Europe, North America and Australia. There are currently no area codes in Rwanda. The international code for Rwanda is ☎ 250. Mobile telephone numbers start with the prefixes ☎ 083, ☎ 085 and ☎ 086.

TOURIST INFORMATION

The Office Rwandais du Tourisme et des Parcs Nationaux (Rwandan Tourism Board), otherwise known as ORTPN, is in Kigali; see p551 for more on contact details and its services. With no network of hostels or camps around the country, there is very little travel information available in Rwanda.

VISAS

Visas are required by everyone except nationals of Canada, Germany, South Africa, Sweden, the UK, the USA and other East African countries. For most other passport holders, visas cost US\$60 and are issued instantly upon arrival at either the border or the airport.

Those driving their own vehicles are required to buy an entry permit at the border for RFr5000. Insurance is compulsory, and is available from **Sonarwa** (☎ Kigali 573350), starting at about RFr4000 per day.

VISA EXTENSIONS

Both tourist and transit visas can be extended in Kigali at **Ministère de l'Intérieur** (MININTER; ☎ 585856) in the Kacyiru district, about 7km northeast of the city centre. Extensions take a week or more to issue and cost RFr15,000 per month.

VISAS FOR ONWARD TRAVEL

Anyone wanting visas for neighbouring countries while in Rwanda should take note of the following (see p590 for the addresses):

Burundi Visas cost US\$40 for one month single entry, although check on the security situation very carefully before visiting. Visas are also available at the border.

DRC At the time of research, visas were not being issued for travel to Kinshasa as the embassy had not yet reopened. However, for land crossings to eastern DRC eight-day visas are available at Bukavu or Goma for US\$35.

Kenya Visas cost US\$50 or the equivalent in local currency, require two photographs and are issued the same day if you apply before 11.30am. Visas are also available on arrival.

Tanzania Visas require two photos and generally take 24 hours to issue. The cost depends on nationality. Visas are also available on arrival.

Uganda Visas cost US\$30, require two photos and are issued in 24 hours. Visas are available on the border.

WOMEN TRAVELLERS

Although Rwanda is a safe place for travelling, it is sensible not to venture too far off the beaten track alone and to avoid wandering down dark streets in larger towns. In general, women will find that they encounter far fewer hassles from men than elsewhere in the region.

WORK

With all the international money sloshing around Rwanda, one might be forgiven for thinking it would be easy to pick up some work here. However, most international organisations tend to recruit professionals from home and in the local community. Anyone considering looking for work must secure a work permit from a Rwandan embassy before entering the country.

TRANSPORT IN RWANDA

GETTING THERE & AWAY

For information on getting to Rwanda from outside East Africa, see p616.

If you're crossing borders, please be advised that Rwanda (and Burundi) is one hour behind the rest of East Africa.

Entering Rwanda

Yellow-fever vaccination certificates are in theory compulsory for entry or exit, but in reality are rarely requested.

Air

Gregoire Kayibanda International Airport (KGL) is located at Kanombe, 10km east of Kigali centre. Note that most of the discounted air fares available in Europe and North America use Nairobi as the gateway to East Africa. Most high-end tourists also enter by land as part of a two-country safari including Uganda. Air tickets bought in Rwanda for international flights are expensive, and compare poorly with what is on offer in Nairobi or Kampala.

AIRLINES IN RWANDA

Ethiopian Airlines (ET; ☎ 575045; www.flyethiopian.com; hub Addis Ababa)

Kenya Airways (KQ; Map p550; ☎ 577972; www.kenya-airways.com; Ave des Mille Collines; hub Nairobi)

Rwandair Express (WB; ☎ 503687; www.rwandair.com; hub Kigali)

SN Brussels Airline (SN; Map p550; ☎ 575290; www.brusselsairlines.com; Hotel des Mille Collines; hub Brussels)

South African Airways (SA; Map p550; ☎ 577777; www.flysaa.com; Blvd de la Revolution; hub Johannesburg)

TO/FROM BURUNDI

Rwandair Express and Kenya Airways connect Kigali and Bujumbura.

TO/FROM KENYA

Rwandair Express and Kenya Airways offer daily services between Kigali and Nairobi.

TO/FROM TANZANIA

Rwandair Express has direct flights between Kigali and Kilimanjaro.

TO/FROM UGANDA

Rwandair Express and Ethiopian Airlines connect Kigali with Entebbe International Airport for Kampala.

Land

Rwanda shares land borders with Burundi, DRC, Tanzania and Uganda. However, most travellers only tend to use the crossings with Uganda. The main crossing with Tanzania is considered safe, but passes through some pretty remote country. There are also land border crossings with DRC, but with the exception of the Gisenyi border post for visiting Goma

and the mountain gorillas, it is currently not advisable to cross. Finally, the land border with Burundi has to be considered risky as long as rebels remain active there. We crossed here at the time of research, but check the security situation in Burundi before travelling this way.

TO/FROM BURUNDI

The main border crossing between Rwanda and Burundi is via Huye and Kayanza, on the Kigali to Bujumbura road, which is sealed pretty much all the way. The border post is called Kayanza Haut and Burundian visas are available on arrival for US\$40. Bus companies Yahoo Car, New Yahoo Coach and Gaso Bus all run daily buses between Kigali and Bujumbura (RFR5000-6000, about six hours), departing at about 7am. There is also a direct road from Bujumbura to Cyangugu, but this is not in such good condition and should be considered comparatively unsafe.

TO/FROM DRC

There are two crossings between Rwanda and DRC, both on the shores of Lake Kivu. To the north is the crossing between Gisenyi and Goma; this was considered safe at the time of writing, though only for short trips to Goma, climbing Nyriragongo volcano or visiting the mountain gorillas. Longer trips into DRC or overland trips through the country are inadvisable at the time of writing. The southern border between Cyangugu and Bukavu is also open for crossing, but the security situation around Bukavu is more volatile than Goma. Check carefully in Cyangugu before venturing across, and be very wary of visiting Parc National Kahuzi-Biega as there have been security problems there.

TO/FROM TANZANIA

Daily minibuses go from Kigali to Rusumu (US\$6, three hours), where you'll need to walk

across the Kagera river bridge. Once across, there are pick-up taxis to the tiny town (and former refugee camp) of Benako (marked as Kasulo on some maps; Tsh2500, 25 minutes), about 20km southeast. For more detail on onward travel from Benako, see p261.

TO/FROM UGANDA

There are two main crossing points for foreigners: between Kigali and Kabale via Gatuna (Katuna), and between Musanze (Ruhengeri) and Kisoro via Cyanika.

The border is called Gatuna on the Rwandan side, Katuna on the Ugandan side. There are lots of minibuses between Kigali and the border at Gatuna (RFR2000, 1½ hours) throughout the day. There are also plenty of shared taxis (US\$1000) and special hire taxis (US\$15,000 for the whole car) travelling back and forth between Katuna and Kabale.

From Musanze (Ruhengeri) to Kisoro via Cyanika the road is in excellent shape on the Rwandan side and in poor condition on the Ugandan side. With Parc National des Volcans increasingly popular, the Rwandan military have prioritised security on this stretch. Minibuses link either side of the border with Musanze (RFR1000, 25km).

Those travelling direct between Kigali and Kampala can travel with **Jaguar Executive Coaches** (☎ 086-14838), which offers coaches (RFR5000 to RFR7000) departing in the morning from Nyabugogo Bus Station, and taking eight to nine hours, including a long border crossing. **Regional Coach** (☎ 575963) also offers morning buses to Kampala, which continue on to Nairobi (RFR16,000).

Tours

For more info on a few companies running organised tours, see p74.

CROSSING TO BURUNDI? DRC?

Don't cross into Burundi by land without carefully checking the current security situation in the north of the country. We were able to safely travel by bus from Bujumbura to Kigali, but there is no substitute for double-checking the latest story – ongoing conflict in Burundi means that ambushes are a distinct possibility.

And while we're on the subject, think twice, maybe twice again, before crossing into DRC. We were able to safely cross into Goma from Gisenyi, but things have been very volatile in DRC over the terrible years of civil war – it is extremely important to do your own homework before visiting. Should things stay stable, a DRC loop between Rwanda and Uganda is an enticing prospect, but check, check and check again before you sign up.

GETTING AROUND

Air

Rwandair Express (p592) recently introduced domestic flights between Kigali and Gisenyi.

Bus & Minibus

Rwanda has a reasonable road system, for the most part due to its small size and a large dose of foreign assistance. The only major unsealed roads are those running along the shore of Lake Kivu and some smaller stretches around the country.

The best buses are privately run, scheduled services operated by Okapi Car, Trans Express 2000, Atraco Express and Virunga Ponctuel. Destinations covered include Huye (Butare), Gisenyi, Kibuye and Musanze (Ruhengeri) and departures are guaranteed to leave, hourly in many cases. They are less crowded and drive more carefully than the normal minibuses, but cost a little more.

You will find there are plenty of well-maintained, modern minibuses serving all the main routes. Head to the bus stand in any town between dawn and about 3pm, and it is quite easy to find one heading to Kigali and nearby towns. Destinations are displayed in the front window and the fares are fixed (you can ask other passengers to be sure). However, anyone who gets stuck somewhere late in the afternoon is going to have to pay top price for the privilege of getting out.

Minibuses leave when full, and this means when all the seats are occupied (unlike in Kenya and Tanzania, where most of the time they won't leave until you can't breathe for the people sitting on your lap and jamming the aisle). They are, however, still quite cramped. There is no extra charge for baggage.

Whichever form of transport you end up taking, you should be prepared to be stopped at military checkpoints. These vary in number depending on the route, but at each it is necessary to get out and allow the soldiers to examine all luggage. Other than the time it takes, there's no hassle at all; and it pays

to remember the checkpoints help ensure your security.

Car & Motorcycle

Cars are suitable for most of the country's main roads, but those planning to explore Parc National de l'Akagera or follow the shores of Lake Kivu might be better off with a 4WD.

Car hire isn't well established in Rwanda, but most travel agents and tour operators in Kigali can organise something for RFr25,000 to RFr50,000 per day for a small car and up.

Ferry

Before the latest civil war, there were ferries on Lake Kivu that connected the Rwandan ports of Cyanguu, Kibuye and Gisenyi, but these are suspended at present. Speedboat charters are currently the only option between these ports, but they are prohibitively expensive.

Hitching

Hitching around Rwanda can be relatively easy because of the prodigious number of NGO vehicles on the roads. Drivers will rarely ask for payment for a lift. Women who decide to hitch should realise that accepting a lift from long-distance truck drivers is unwise, but the NGOs should otherwise be OK. Travellers who decide to hitch should understand that they are taking a small but potentially serious risk.

Local Transport

TAXI

These are only really necessary in Kigali. See p558 for details. It is also possible to find the odd taxi in most other major towns.

TAXI-MOTOR

Most towns are compact enough to get around on foot, but where you need transport, the taxi-motor is a good bet. It's just a motorcycle, but the driver can usually sling a pack across the petrol tank. They generally drive safely, if a little fast, and there's usually a helmet for the passenger.

© Lonely Planet Publications. To make it easier for you to use, access to this chapter is not digitally restricted. In return, we think it's fair to ask you to use it for personal, non-commercial purposes only. In other words, please don't upload this chapter to a peer-to-peer site, mass email it to everyone you know, or resell it. See the terms and conditions on our site for a longer way of saying the above - 'Do the right thing with our content.'