

# Rwanda Rising - Gravel Bikes and Gorillas

Trip Code: PXGG

Version:



PIONEER



GUIDED GROUP



CHALLENGING



## HIGHLIGHTS

- Follow in the tyre tracks of the world's finest on a lap of the 2025 UCI World Championships course on partially closed roads, just a few months after the main event.
- Spend a day trekking through rainforest in the Volcanoes National Park, to spend time with a band of wild mountain gorillas in their verdant volcano-side home.
- Ride on gravel tracks through the many and varied patchwork landscapes that make up this beautiful

nation, from rainforests to tea plantations and shimmering lakeshores.

■ Visit the Africa Rising Cycling Centre, home of the National Rwandan Cycling Team, the beating heart of central Africa's love affair with two wheels.

## AT A GLANCE

- 10 days gravel biking
- 2 days wildlife walks and gorilla trekking and cultural tours
- all National Park Fees included
- 50% vehicle support
- 85% dirt roads
- Max altitude 2,700 metres
- Join at Kigali

## ACCOMMODATIONS & MEALS

[VIEW DATES, PRICES & BOOK YOUR HOLIDAY HERE](#)

# Introduction

In the land of a thousand hills, the dirt and gravel roads are the arteries of the country, spreading across the land in a sinuous mesh connecting villages to towns, farmers to markets. These ribbons of unsealed road provide the perfect surface for thousands of Rwandans to get around on two wheels too, carrying goods, and each other, on old steel frames with single gears, sometimes carrying loads of over 300 kilos. Bikes are everywhere, and are universally accepted as an efficient and respected way to cover ground. It is on these tracks, and among these cyclists that we will travel through Rwanda, on a gravel cycling adventure that truly gets under the skin of this wonderful nation in the heart of Africa.

Our journey, some 430km of point-to-point cycling, starts in the nation's capital, before heading out for a loop of the western half of Rwanda. We will pass through pockets of dense rainforest, along the shores of the great Lake Kivu, defining the majority of Rwanda's western border, eventually reaching the towering volcanoes of the north, the steep forested flanks of which are some of the last bastions of the mighty mountain gorilla. The first stage, in Kigali, retraces the wheels of the finest road cyclists on earth, we start with a lap of the UCI World Championships Road Race course, run just a few months prior to our departure. We will then head into the plantation-cloaked hills of the south, with tea, coffee and eucalyptus plantations growing on the steep sides of these sun bathed slopes. We pass through the wildlife thrum of Nyungwe Forest National Park and pause for a wildlife experience with the 400 strong troop of colobus monkeys. We then head down to the shores of Lake Kivu before turning north for the best part of a week along its shores. We will glide through plantations and villages alive with communities and schoolhouses, with smiling and happy faces, thrilled to see cyclists racing through on two wheels. We will start days with good coffee, before passing through the hillsides where much of the beans are grown, the glaucous leaves and small red berries providing a moment of shade for us, and a wage for the growers that live and work on these slopes. Eventually, after several days of increasingly tough hill-climbing days, we reach the volcanoes and gorillas of the north, as well as the Africa Rising Cycling Centre, the birthplace of the Rwandan cycling team and testament to the incredible successes of this wonderful cycling loving country. Finally, we head back south through the beautiful Twin Lakes

region and on towards Kigali, with a short transfer taking us back into the city and the end of our great exploration of this small but mighty country.

## **Is this holiday for you?**

This is a gravel cycling trip with 10 days riding over 430 kilometres. There will be considerable climbing and descending, over 11,000 metres of both, which means that although the stages aren't long, they are tough, and unrelenting, owing to the high grade for the distance covered. The pace will be relaxed, and include plenty of refreshment stops, however, Rwanda's proximity to the equator means it will always be warm, and may tire us out more quickly than we are used to. The trails are mostly unsealed but smooth, and although there are sometimes short stretches of more technical terrain, this is never beyond the means of a gravel bike or short travel MTB hardtail and always on double track road. There are a few sections of tarmac, particularly in villages and towns on thoroughfares, and although the roads are busy, cyclists are incredibly well respected, the drivers will pass wide and slow, and in some cases, particularly the larger, heavier trucks will sit patiently behind, only overtaking when they have enough space and momentum to do so. Of course nowhere is without its risks, but nonetheless, Rwanda is a very safe country for cycling in.

Off bike days/half days are designed to promote active recovery and will always include a walk of some description. In Nyungwe we walk on a mix of made paths and canopy walkways through the forest on undulating terrain, as well as some sections of unmade, hacked forest floor, which will likely contain some steep and soft ground with plenty of vegetation. In Volcanoes National Park we walk through hacked bamboo forest uphill for anywhere between 30 mins to 3 hours on often wet and sludgy ground. Our guides kit us out with gaiters before hand, and solid walking shoes with good treads are useful here. In both locations, our guides offer us sticks to help steady ourselves with as well as advice, and porters in Volcanoes will even offer a hand to hold on technical ground.

# Itinerary

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Version:

## Holiday Information

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### What's Included

- A professional, qualified and English speaking cycling leader
- Specialist gorilla tracking guide and team
- A single timed airport transfer on arrival & departure
- All accommodation as described
- All meals
- National Park entrance fees
- All land and boat transport involved in the itinerary
- One support vehicle
- Baggage transfer
- All activities/excursions mentioned as per the day-to-day itinerary

## What's not Included

- Travel insurance
- Tips for support staff and guide
- Miscellaneous expenses; drinks, souvenirs etc
- Local bike hire
- Bike Carriage on the flights - please check with your carrier for charges

## Joining Arrangements & Transfers

The group will meet at the hotel in Kigali.

Transfers are provided from/to Kigali Airport for all clients arriving on Day 1 of the Land Only itinerary, and departing on the last day of the Land Only itinerary.

Hotel contact details and an emergency number will be provided with your booking confirmation.

## Meal Plan

All meals included throughout.



## Food & Water

### Drinking Water

It is not recommended to drink untreated water from the taps. If you are on a trekking or cycling holiday, water is supplied to fill up your individual bottles. This will be boiled, filtered or provided in large jerry cans or 5 litre bottles. Additionally you should take purification tablets or a filter bottle (such as a [Water-To-Go bottle](#)) to treat your water when in towns or where water is not supplied. We do not encourage the purchasing of single use plastic bottles.

Rwanda is considered one of the gardens of Africa, with much of the countryside of the nation given over to a mix of plantations and subsistence farming, primarily for food production. A lot of the food produced is exported across the world, particularly tea and coffee, but plenty of it also remains. We will enjoy lots of fresh fruit and vegetables on this trip, much of it grown locally.

Breakfast will regularly consist of plenty of fresh fruits, and often bread and omelettes too. Fruits usually present include melon, papaya, pineapple, persimmon and bananas.

Lunches will be mostly taken on the go, either at a dedicated picnic stop along the route, or on the shorter days, at the end of the route. Our guides will prepare a table of fresh fruits, packets of crisps, and often take a lunch order to pick up at a local sandwich shop along the way. Sandwiches are usually toasted with hams, cheeses, roasted peppers and other vegetables, and the bread is thick and filling. A Cool box full of glass bottled soft drinks will be on hand, usually with a drinks order also taken in advance. Hand sanitizer is always available, and water butts are present for washing/rinsing hands and fruit (sparingly), and for re-filling water bottles.

In the evenings, we eat at the accommodations and a set menu will be provided at each. The menu is varied, with many international dishes served, although this varies from place to place. Local dishes to look out for include grilled tilapia, especially on Lake Kivu, where you might be able to see and hear the singing fishermen heading out into the bay at dusk to catch the fish by moonlight, their lights on poles attracting the fish to the surface, and their songs helping them to row in time. Matoke, a mashed plantain dish sometimes spiced and served alongside meats and fish. Brochette, skewered meat of various types, cooked over an open flame.

Accompaniments often include Ugali, a pulverised maize starch usually cooked in water or milk, performing the same carb role as white rice in many dishes, also grilled or fried plantain, sweet potatoes, and cassava.

On every table in Rwanda you will also find a tiny eyedropper bottle, but please do not attempt to administer to your eyeballs. This is the concentrated chilli oil known as Akabanga. Just one or two drops on your food will transform any meal. Give it a try if you like to wake up your taste buds with pure fire.

Coffee culture is big in Rwanda, and there are many fine establishments along the route with great, locally grown beans available to sample, although milk is likely the only accompaniment so take it black if you would ordinarily be ordering milk alternatives. Tea is also very popular, and alongside the regular black tea offerings, many places offer African tea, which is made with hot milk and plenty of ginger. It usually takes a while to make, so order as soon as you arrive and your taste buds will not be disappointed.

Finally, we should give a mention to the banana beer. This locally made liquor, often seen sloshing around in bright yellow jerry cans, inconceivably stacked high on the back of a bike, is labelled as beer but is probably closer to barley wine in its strength, taste and consistency. Try it, but with caution, the

sweetness belies its deceiving strength! Perhaps it is best saved for a rest day or on your return to Kigali, so that you don't have to worry about riding your bike the following day!

## **Accommodation**

Accommodation on this trip is a mix of hotels, lodges, and campsites.

In Kigali, Karongi and Musanze, we stay in a 3\* hotels with functional facilities.

On the shores of Lake Kivu, at Musanze and at Twin Lakes we stay in comfortable lodges sometimes with pools and great views of the surrounding hills.

At Kitabi Eco Centre we stay at a hilltop lodge with great traditional hut rooms. There is a restaurant area with incredible views and friendly welcoming staff, and the rooms are traditional style thatched roof huts in the style of the Rwandan King's Palace visited a day prior, with basic but clean, shared bathroom and shower facilities in separate blocks.

At Uwinka (Nyungwe forest) we camp in tents with all equipment provided including sleeping bags and mats (although of course you can bring your own if you prefer – further details in the equipment list), on a raised timber built platform within the forest canopy. There are basic wash and toilet facilities a short walk away at the National Park HQ. At Kurumbi Base Camp (Gishwati) we use the same equipment but at a dedicated hillside campsite with facilities on site.

If you are travelling by yourself, you will be paired with another single client of the same sex. If this is not available, you may have to pay the single room supplement. Single rooms are available at an additional cost.

## **Group Leader & Support Staff**

This holiday will be accompanied by an experienced cycling leader. In addition, there will be a support vehicle and driver.

In the national park rest day activities we will be joined by expert wildlife guides. At Volcanoes NP, porters offer their services at the start of the walk, and they are generally recruited to help carry day-packs and offer support on technical terrain. They charge a small fee and the guides suggest that this is vital to keep the local community in work and in support of the national park's efforts for conservation in the area.

## **Park Fees & Permits**

The \$1,100 permit to see the Gorillas at Volcanoes National Park is included in the holiday price. An application for a permit will be made by the sales team, on your behalf, upon completion of your booking. If the sales team require any further details to complete the application, they will be in touch.

## Spending Money

We recommend £400GBP will be ample for spending whilst in Rwanda, on excess expenditure, such as drinks, souvenirs, and any snacks required along the way. In most places chip and pin cards can be used, but in exception and when buying objet d'art, our guides will recommend changing some money into the local currency RWF. ATM's will be sought out in Kigali at the start of the trip, as well as local towns at various points along the route where this may be required, and our guides will help us with this. A zero interest worldwide credit card is highly useful for this trip.

## Your Bike

We recommend a gravel bike or cross country mountain bike for this trip. Tyres should be puncture resistant and with a smooth and fast central tread to aid us in covering ground on the few made roads we encounter along the way, as well as the fast rolling dirt roads that form the majority of the trip. Some side knobbles will aid with cornering on loose ground. High volume 40mm plus tyres, and 650b - 29" wheel sizes would be beneficial for covering ground.

If bringing an MTB we would suggest a fork size of 100mm maximum travel. The roads are predominantly well graded, and any more technical sections can be picked through without any great need for suspension. Anything larger than this will be too heavy to ride with for the majority of the route.

Since you are depending on your bike to transport you throughout your holiday, it's important to ensure it is in good working order. If you are not mechanically minded, get your local bicycle dealer to service it for you.

Please contact us if you are unsure about the suitability of your bike.

## Bike Hire

Bike hire is available, and is arranged through the local agent for an extra fee, detailed below. There are short travel hardtails available and these will be either a Giant Fathom or an equivalent bike from an alternative manufacturer. There are S/M/L/XL sizes available, but the fleet size is limited. Please provide your height and preferred bike size (if you have a preference) at time of booking.

Frames are aluminium, drivetrain is Shimano Deore 12 speed mechanical or similar, and brakes are hydraulic Tektro or similar. Forks are 100-120mm travel Rockshox. Hire cost: \$840 for the duration of the trip.

## Travelling With Your Bike

Airlines require that you pack your bike properly for travel and for this holiday we recommend that you use either soft bike bag or a purpose-made bike box or case. Whether you are using a bag or a case, you will need to partially dismantle your bike to pack it. Please note that bike bags or boxes will be placed in secure storage and will not travel with us during the course of the trip.



## Vehicle Support

Throughout the holiday, we will have the back up of a minibus support vehicle with a tow trailer for bikes. On those days when we are moving to a different hotel (every day except one), the group's baggage will be loaded onto the support vehicle which will meet the group at road intersections along the day's ride. The biking leader and the support vehicle driver will watch over the group and they will communicate with each other. Group members will naturally cycle at different speeds and regular stops will be set to allow the group to reform. The support vehicle will carry water, and snacks and each day's picnic lunch. The support vehicle can be made available to pick up any group members who wish to take a break from cycling, although this is limited to road heads, as the tracks we are riding on are not always through roads. Please make sure to communicate your intentions with the guide if you intend to stop so that the guide and support vehicle driver can arrange a suitable stopping point for you.

## Baggage Allowance

Apart from your bike in its bag or box (if you are taking your own bike), you should travel with one main item of luggage, such as a secure but soft trek bag, and a small day pack. Your day pack can be used to carry valuable items such as cameras binoculars and GPS devices in your hand luggage whilst travelling, and on rest day hikes, but will also be useful to separate out items you might want to pick up from the support vehicle during the rides, such as additional clothing.

Your baggage allowance on the flights will depend on your airline. When choosing your flights, whether booking them directly or through KE, you will need to consider the cost of carrying your bike. These costs are your responsibility.

# General Information

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## Passport & Visas

The information that we provide is for UK passport holders.

A passport with 6 months remaining validity at the end of your stay is generally required, and you should have at least 2 blank pages for each country that you visit.

For other nationalities, please refer to your own Government website for the latest information.

**It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct travel documents including vaccinations and health certificates** (*see Health & Vaccinations below*), **and visas for your holiday**. Please ensure that you check the [FCDO](#) for the latest advice for **each country visited** before travel.

## Visa Rwanda

You must have a visa to enter Rwanda as a visitor. UK and other Commonwealth citizens, can get a free 30-day visa on arrival.

You can also apply in advance for a visa from the [Rwandan High Commission in London](#).

## Health & Vaccinations

### VACCINATIONS

You should contact your doctor or travel clinic to check whether you specific require any vaccinations or other preventive measures. On holidays to more remote areas you should also have a dentist check up. You should be up to date with routine courses and boosters as recommended in the UK e.g. diphtheria-tetanus-polio and measles-mumps-rubella), along with hepatitis A and typhoid. In addition you should check whether any specific vaccinations are needed to the regions that you are travelling to. A good online resource is [Travel Health Pro](#).

#### Malaria

There is a risk of Malaria in this country. Malarial prophylaxis are required.

#### Yellow Fever

A certificate of yellow fever vaccination is required if travelling from countries with risk of yellow fever transmission and for travellers having transited for more than 12 hrs through an airport of a country with risk of yellow fever transmission.

#### Severe Allergies

If you have a severe allergy please inform the KE office before you travel. We will do all we can to help, but we cannot guarantee an allergy free environment on KE trips. You will need to carry your own treatment for the allergy with you, as 'adrenaline auto-injectors' are not carried as standard by KE leaders and staff. You should inform your leader on arrival of your allergy, and let them know where you keep your adrenaline pen.

### Currency

The currency in Rwanda is the Rwandan Franc, and there are approximately 1900 RWF to the GBP (£) at time of writing.

### Preparing for your Holiday

The better conditioned you are the more you will enjoy your trip. We suggest that you adopt a sensible weekly exercise regime and fit in a number of long off-road cycle rides in hilly country to ensure you are physically capable of taking part in this trip - this will also provide you with an opportunity to make sure all your riding kit is tried and tested before you travel. Cycling is obviously the best activity to prepare for this trip, however, running, rowing and swimming are also good for developing aerobic fitness and stamina.

## Climate

Rwanda is equatorial, but at altitude, the majority of the country sits between 1700m and 2,500m. This means that the temperature may vary between 20-30 degrees in full sun, but will drop much cooler in the evening especially at higher altitudes.

In the rainforests and at higher altitudes (some days reach 2,700m asl), there will also be some respite from the heat, where there is shade and often a light breeze. We may also have a few thundery showers, and these are quick to form but usually short-lived. Our guides will prepare us for these and mitigate the risk of being out in dangerous weather, perhaps heading out early if the forecast suggests afternoon rain, or using villages and support vehicles for shelter if necessary during the heaviest weather.

## Travel Aware

As a reputable tour operator, KE supports the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's 'Travel Aware' campaign to enable British citizens to prepare for their journeys overseas. The 'Travel Aware' website provides a single, authoritative source of advice for all kinds of travellers and we recommend that before travel, all KE clients visit the official UK Government website at [travelaware.campaign.gov.uk](http://travelaware.campaign.gov.uk) and read the FCDO Travel Advice for their chosen destination. North Americans can also check out the U.S. Department of State website: [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov) for essential travel advice and tips.

KE treat the safety and security of all clients as the most important aspect of any trip we organise. We would not run any trip that we did not consider reasonably safe. Should the FCDO advise against travel for any reason, we will contact everyone booked to travel to discuss the situation. We receive regular updates directly from the FCDO and are in constant touch with our contacts on the ground. If you have any questions about government travel advice, please call our office.

## Books

Bring with you, or gen-up in advance. This list is by no means exhaustive, but offers some recommendations for reading around some of the many facets of life and culture that you may experience whilst on this trip:

Land of Second Chances: The Impossible Rise of Rwanda's Cycling Team - Tim Lewis

Kibogo - Scholastique Mukasonga

A Thousand Hills: Rwanda's Rebirth and the Man Who Dreamed It - Stephen Kinzer

## Travel Insurance

It is an essential condition of joining a holiday with KE Adventure Travel that you have a valid travel insurance policy to cover the cost of medical treatment and to protect the value of your holiday in the event of cancellation. When taking out insurance please ensure the policy you choose covers you for the activities and altitude included in your itinerary.

For appropriate insurance cover we recommend Campbell Irvine Direct. Please go to our [Travel Insurance](#) page for further information and to get a quote.

# Equipment Information

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## Equipment List

For this trip you will need your usual cycling clothing, including shoes, cycling gloves and helmet (the latter must be worn at all times when cycling).

Whether you are hiring a bike or taking your own, we recommend that you take the usual day-ride essentials of: mobile phone, multi-tool, mini-pump, tyre levers, spare tubes and puncture repair kit, and the knowledge of how to use them.

- Bike Wear
- Cycling helmet
- Cycling shoes
- Padded cycling shorts
- Long leg cycling trousers or leg warmers
- Lycra arm warmers
- Short sleeve cycling jerseys
- Long sleeved cycling jersey
- Lightweight windproof gilet
- Lightweight waterproof jacket
- Cycling gloves
- Buff
- Sunglasses
- Sun cream (inc. total bloc for lips/nose)

- Camera

### **Other Stuff**

- Travel and off-the-bike clothing and footwear
  - Rainforest trekking clothing preferably long sleeved and mosquito proof, waterproof, and good sturdy walking shoes
- Binoculars
- Wash bag, towel, toiletries
- Swimwear
- Basic First Aid kit and personal medication
- Chamois Cream (e.g. Assos or Ozone)
- Reusable cloth bag for shopping (to avoid plastic bags)
- Sleeping bag for camping nights, these are provided, but if you prefer to bring your own, please inform us at time of booking. A 2-3 season bag would suit for this trip.
- Inflatable pillow for camping nights

### **Spares**

If you are hiring a bike you do not need to bring any spares. The hire bikes are provided in good condition and a supply of spares is carried. You may be asked to pay directly for any spares used, especially in the case of crash damage or damage by mis-use. If you are taking your own bike, you should consider taking a minimum of spares, including a couple of spare spokes (for each wheel if they are different), spare brake blocks (or brake disc pads), chain links/chain connector, rear derailleur hanger and any non-standard parts specific to your bike.

If hiring, and you use spd shoes, bring your regular pedals with you and the cycling shoes that clip into them. This will help you to feel comfortable on your hire bike as well as requiring minimum set up and adjustment on the first day of your trip, just remember to uninstall them again on the last day. If you are used to riding flat pedals, just bring your regular riding shoes, as all hire bikes in Rwanda are fitted with flat pedals as standard.

### **Repairs**

Whilst not essential, it is a good idea that you familiarise yourself with how to carry out at least some basic repairs to your bike e.g. changing an inner tube and fixing a puncture. Your bike guide will be happy to help with repairs and general maintenance, but being able to carry out a simple repair yourself could save the inconvenience of having to wait for assistance.

### Hydration and Energy Snacks

You should take 2 standard water bottles (we encourage re-filling water bottles rather than single use plastic) and also consider taking a small supply of the gels, power bars or sports drink mix that you would normally use on a ride at home.

In Rwanda, safe drinking water is scarce, so if possible, bring purification tablets or a filter bottle (such as a [Water-To-Go](#) bottle) to treat your water when in towns or where water is not supplied. We do not encourage the purchasing of single use plastic bottles.

As an addition, the support vehicle will carry a 20l jerry can of filtered water, but this will only be available at the lunch stops and a few other infrequent points along each of the off-road routes.

Please contact us if you have any questions about your equipment.

## Why Choose KE

### Why KE?

This pioneering trip is the first foray for KE into Rwanda on two wheels. We have created an itinerary that covers some of the best gravel biking routes in the country, providing short but demanding, and incredibly rewarding stages, whilst also ensuring cultural and wildlife rich experiences when off the bike in two of Rwanda's finest national parks. These active recovery days really set our itinerary apart from the rest. We will head out on walks through the forest, the gentle movement flushing out the lactic acid built up on the days prior, encouraging your legs to feel better as the day progresses. Be aware though, that whilst your legs are recovering, the flora and fauna that compete for space and light in the dense rainforests will assault your senses. Your eyes will be fit to deceive as you lock gazes with giant silverbacks, and inquisitive colobus monkeys alike. Their human-like expressions have a way of boring into your soul, reminding us of our primeval ancestry. The smell of fresh overnight rain on humus rich forest floors will drag your soul back to these ancient times. And your ears will ring with the cacophony of the forest, the birdsong and primate howl of day ceding to the frog and cicada hush of night. Both are simply captivating. No cycling itinerary gives you rest days quite like this, and we are confident you will return from this pioneering trip with tired happy legs, and a camera bursting with memories of other worldly wildlife experiences too.

**Please Note** This document was downloaded on 20/08/2025 and the trip is subject to change