



# DISCOVER A NEW AFRICAN DAWN

ONCE known as the Switzerland of Africa, Rwanda leapt from glossy tourist brochures to front-page headlines with the 1994 genocide. Sadly, 10 years later (because news cameras don't linger beyond a disaster) the country is still best known to many for this tragedy. Naturally, potential visitors feel trepidation and wonder what awaits them, but most are in for a surprise. Normality testifies to Rwanda's renaissance. Individual visitors can decide how much they want to embrace the country's recent history.

Despite its scars, the country is stable and everyday human interactions reassuringly familiar. The 1994 genocide was pre-planned and occurred only after a build-up over decades. Both colonial and post-independence political authorities encouraged ethnic hatred between the majority Hutu people and the minority Tutsis, historically more powerful. Events culminated in the brutal slaughter of up to one million Tutsis and moderate Hutus by hardline Hutus. Over three million fled as refugees. In July, 1994, the Rwandan Patriotic Front captured Kigali and ended the genocide. It formed the country's government, ensuring strong political stability, and retained its leadership in the 2003 democratic elections.

Although still confronting its past openly, Rwanda now looks forward. Perpetrators of

the genocide are tried at the UN's Arusha tribunal and Rwanda's Gacaca community courts. Millions of refugees have been repatriated, while frank mass graves affirm a commitment to ensuring such horror never recurs. The focus is on reconciliation and forging national, not ethnic, unity. Visitors will be conscious of the genocide, but not overwhelmed by it.

Strong economic growth is nurturing prosperity and stability. Of course tension and poverty still exist, but given the magnitude of Rwanda's suffering, its recent achievements are astonishing. Even during the genocide, stories emerged of courage and unity – the spirit now fuelling Rwanda's rehabilitation.

## GENOCIDE FACTS

- Rwanda has now been peaceful for ten years.
- The pre-orchestrated genocide occurred after decades of political manipulation and propaganda.
- Up to one million people died in a 100-day period – the fastest, most brutal, genocide in human history. Several million more fled the country.
- Over three and a half million refugees have since been repatriated.
- It would take 200 years to try all the genocide suspects under the conventional legal system, so traditional community courts are key in dispensing justice.



# Q&A

## Am I now safe travelling around Rwanda?

Yes. The genocide is over and stability is high. You're as safe as if travelling in any peaceful country – if not safer, given low petty crime rates.

## How can a nation rebuild from such devastation?

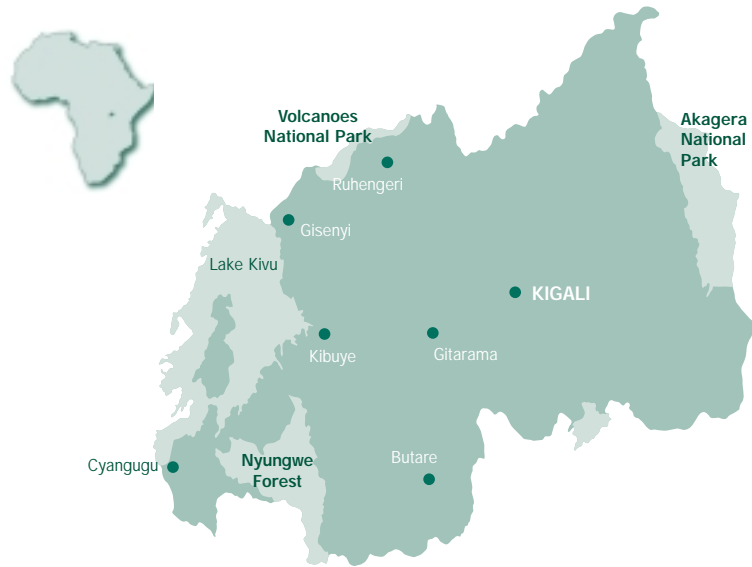
By facing it head-on and working to ensure it never recurs. In league with the UN, Rwanda is serving justice to the genocide's perpetrators. Suspects are categorised according to the severity of their alleged crimes. The most serious cases are tried in Rwandan courts and the UN Criminal Tribunal in Arusha, Tanzania. Lesser cases are handled by Rwanda's Gacaca community courts, which have the benefit of involving ordinary citizens, thereby increasing reconciliation. Rwanda also has many graphic and honest genocide memorials.

## Where will I find the genocide memorials?

Throughout the country, mass graves serve as chilling reminders that such horrors must never be allowed to recur. There is a large genocide memorial in Kigali's Gisozi district; south of the city are two churches which serve as memorials. The bloodstained but now-empty church at Nyamata witnessed a horrific massacre; in the courtyard, an underground chamber contains the skulls and bones of many victims. Nearby Ntarama church has been left poignantly as it was after the bodies were removed, complete with personal items on the floor. Kibuye, on Lake Kivu, saw the most comprehensive slaughter of Tutsis: an official mass grave contains over 10,000 corpses. Nyarubuya, in Eastern Rwanda, also has a powerful memorial, while one of the starkest is at Murambi, where over 1800 bodies of the 27,000 exhumed here are displayed.

## Will I encounter evidence of the genocide in daily life?

Rwanda doesn't try to hide its recent history, although most visitors find that you can't deduce from everyday life that such a tragedy occurred. Understandably, you won't always encounter *joie de vivre*, but unless you are at a memorial, the genocide is not generally evident and is not a subject forced on you.



## So do I need to be conscious of it when dealing with people?

You don't need to think about it constantly, but you should be sensitive to it. People have suffered and you mustn't push them if they don't want to talk. If they seem weary or subdued, it's not hard to understand why. Memories of the genocide remain potent but daily life continues determinedly with a warmth that surprises many visitors.

## Is there a tour that takes in the main genocide sites?

Local operators are experienced in arranging tailor-made trips and can include visits to genocide memorials if requested.

## Are there funds for victim support?

Charities such as the Rwanda United Kingdom Goodwill Organisation (RUGO) help victims rebuild their lives, through orphanages, education and memorials in Rwanda and fundraising events in Britain ([www.rugo.org](http://www.rugo.org)).

## GENOCIDE-SENSITIVE TRAVEL

- Photographing the genocide sites and memorials is encouraged by the guides.
- Photographing daily scenes and people is not acceptable unless you have asked permission and perhaps paid a small fee to your intended subject.
- It is generally acceptable to talk to Rwandans about the genocide in a sensitive way; people realise that it is foremost in visitors' minds.
- Do not push anyone to talk about their genocide-related experiences.
- Accept that the genocide is far beyond your own experience and is something you'll never fully understand.

[www.discover-rwanda.org](http://www.discover-rwanda.org)

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