

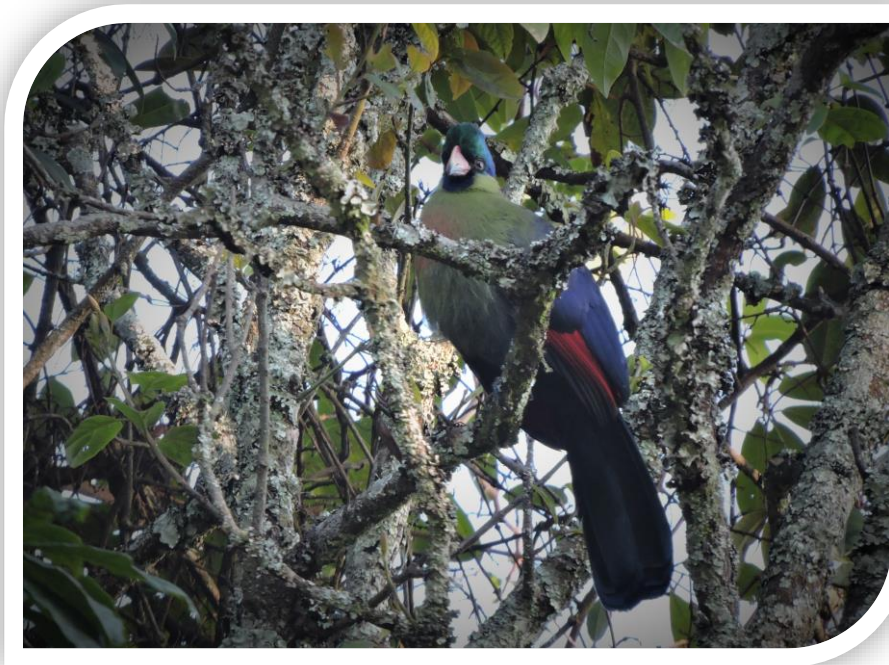
RWANDA

August 1 – 8, 2023

\$5400, Single supplement \$520

August 1 – 8, 2024

\$5600, Single supplement \$540



Overview

The 1994 Genocide is what most people will remember Rwanda for, but there is so much more to this tiny country, known as the land of a thousand hills. Although densely populated, there are still numerous well-preserved and well-run parks and reserves offering outstanding birding, wildlife, and scenery. It also has the honor of being the cleanest country on the African continent, with disposable plastic bags completely outlawed; this is very evident as you travel throughout the country with hardly any rubbish to be seen. We will visit two very different national parks on our short extension to this beautiful country - Nyungwe in the west with its lush montane rainforest and Akagera in the east with its vast stretches of savannah so typical of East Africa.

Roads in Rwanda are generally good, and we'll mostly be driving on tarmac surface of good quality. The general speed limit is rather low throughout the country due to how densely populated it is, and most of the roads are single carriage way, so travel is generally slow. Luckily, distances travelled each day are fairly short.

Generally, the tour will cover a multitude of habitats from lush rainforests, wild Savannah, and dry acacia to wetlands, some with papyrus reed beds and others with open water. This short tour will likely give us a chance to see more than 200 species of birds, with a focus on Albertine Rift Endemics and species that we are unlikely to see in Uganda. We can also expect some good mammal viewing in Akagera.

Destinations

Nyungwe National Forest is a vast area of mountain rainforest, home to many species of primates including Chimpanzees, Owl-faced Monkeys, and Colobus Monkeys. There are 320 bird species recorded here, including 30 Albertine Rift endemics, in what is arguably Africa's oldest montane rainforest.

Akagera National Park, hugging the border with Tanzania, is characterized by woodland, swamps, low mountains, and savannah. The varied terrain shelters wildlife including zebras, giraffes, elephants, lions, and hundreds of bird species, including the rare Shoebill.

Weather

Straddling the equator, Rwanda experiences little fluctuation in temperature throughout the year and no real winter or summer. There is a defined dry season from June to September, but for Volcanoes National Park and Nyungwe Forest, that only means that it will rain less, as these parks are wet throughout the year.

In general, the eastern part of Rwanda, including Akagera National Park, shares the warm climate of Kigali. However, it never gets extremely hot due to the relatively high altitude. The parks in the western mountainous area, including Volcanoes National Park and Nyungwe Forest National Park, are a lot cooler with daytime temperatures around 16°C–21°C (61°F–70°F), due to the even higher altitude. The latter two parks also have more rain due to the mountain peaks and rainforest habitat.

Dry Season – June to September

There is little rainfall during these months in most of the country but it can rain at any time in the rainforest.

Two Rainy Seasons – September to November and March to May

There is break in rainfall between December and February, but this does not mean that it stops raining altogether, and thunderstorms can still be expected throughout this time in the east. Luckily, these mostly occur in the afternoon and last for a few hours. But take note that in the rain forests in the west, it can rain anytime.

Detailed Itinerary

Day 1 Arrival in Rwanda

Participants will arrive in Kigali, Rwanda, today; most flights will likely land in late afternoon or early evening. We will be transferred to our hotel, where we will discuss our target birds and our itinerary for the next few days during dinner. **(Dinner only)**



Handsome Francolin

Day 2 Drive to Nyungwe NP (250km / 150 miles on tarmac)

We will depart early for Nyungwe National Park in the southwest of the country. This will mostly be a driving day with the goal to get to Nyungwe in time for lunch, which we'll enjoy at one of the lodges on the eastern edge of the park. After lunch, we'll have the whole afternoon to drive through the park on a very good road to our lodge on the western edge of the park. This will allow us ample time to get our first taste of what Nyungwe has to offer with stops for roadside birding as we go along. **(BLD)**

Days 3 and 4 Birding Nyungwe National Park

We'll enjoy two full days of birding in Nyungwe Forest in search of some of the Albertine Rift endemics that are often easier here than in neighboring Uganda. Nyungwe protects a massive tract of montane rain forest and, even with two full days here, we will barely scratch the surface of what's available here. A good network of trails will allow us easy access to some of the best parts of the forest, where we will search for the likes of **Lagden's Bushshrike**, **Kungwe Apalis**, **Ruwenzori Turaco**, **Blue-headed Sunbird**, **Stuhlmann's Sunbird**, and **Neumann's Warbler**. **Grauer's Swamp Warbler** is certainly far easier to see here than in Uganda, and we will make a dedicated effort to find it at Kamiranzovu Swamp. One of our main targets here, in one of the only reliable places to find this species, will be the endangered **Red-collared Mountain Babbler**. Other notable species to look out for include **White-bellied Crested Flycatcher**, **Mountain Sooty Boubou**, **Willard's Sooty Boubou**, and **Dwarf Honeyguide**. Time permitting, we'll also spend some time on the canopy walkway, a 70m high, 160m long suspended bridge through the canopy of the forest. Another top target here is **Grey-chested Babbler**, which we had great success in finding during our 2021 tour. **Dusky Crimsonwing** are often seen feeding along the main road, as are **Handsome Francolin**, a species that truly lives up to its name and must surely rate right up there as one of the most beautiful of the francolins.

(BLD)

Day 5 Nyungwe NP to Kigali (250km / 150 miles on tarmac)

We'll do some early morning birding around the lodge, which is a really good spot for raptors such as **Augur Buzzard** and **Forest Buzzard**. After breakfast, we'll head through Nyungwe NP on our way back to Kigali, birding our way out of the park. We will have lunch en route and should easily find the rather abundant **Ruaha Chat** on our way. We should get back Kigali in time for an afternoon break.

(BLD)

Day 6 Kigali to Akagera National Park (108 km / 108 miles on tarmac road)

We'll enjoy some early morning birding at the Masaka Wetlands near Umusambi Village on the outskirts of Kigali. This is a great spot, almost within the city limits, to find a whole host of good species such as **White-collared Olive-back**, **Black-and-White Mannikin**, **Slender-billed Weaver**, **Swamp Flycatcher** and **Black-headed Gonolek**. We'll

continue on our drive of 2 - 3 hours

to Akagera National Park, a Big Five reserve with around 490 bird species on record. We'll have lunch en route and, once we've checked in at our hotel, we'll spend the afternoon birding around the lodge where our main target will be the range-restricted **Red-faced Barbet**. There are plenty of other good birds on the lodge grounds, including **Ruaha Chat**, **Crimson-rumped Waxbill**, and **Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu**. A walk in the evening could produce **African Scops-Owl** as well as **Southern White-faced Owl**.

(BLD)



Augur Buzzard

Day 7 Full day in Akagera NP

We have a full day to spend in Akagera with ample chance for game viewing as well as incredible birding, with very rewarding opportunities for photography. Species such as **Sooty Chat** and **Blue-naped Mousebird** are very common here, and raptors abound. We'll listen for the distinctive call of **Trilling Cisticola**, whilst keeping an eye out for **Red-faced Crombec**, **Slate-colored Boubou**, **Spot-flanked Barbet**, **Red-necked Spurfowl** and **Bare-faced Go-away-bird**. Akagera is also a particularly good place to look for **Long-tailed Cisticola** and **Brown-backed Scrub-Robin**. We hope to get in on some mammal action as well and will keep a look-out for Elephant, Lion and even the likes of Side-striped Jackal and Serval, not to mention a good array of antelope species. We'll have lunch back at our very comfortable lodge with a short break during the heat of the day before heading out toward the shores of Lake Ihema in the afternoon. **Red-chested Sunbird** is common along the lakeshore, and we should see a number of waterbirds. We might even bump into **Hildebrandt's Spurfowl** along here before heading back to the lodge for a scrumptious dinner. An optional night drive can be arranged from the lodge.

(BLD)

Day 8 Akagera NP to Kigali for flight out

We'll squeeze in our last early morning of birding in Akagera NP before breakfast and then drive back to Kigali for flights out, either to our home cities or to Entebbe to start the Uganda tour.

Price Includes:

- All accommodation
- All meals as indicated in the itinerary (BLD = Breakfast Lunch Dinner)
- Unlimited bottled water
- One soft drink, local beer or glass of local wine at dinner
- Transportation in a suitable safari vehicle
- Fuel
- Park entrance fees
- Guiding Fees, including local guides
- All tips to local guides and restaurants

Price Excludes:

- All flights
- Health and trip cancellation insurance
- Visa fees
- Items of a personal nature (such as gifts and laundry)
- All Covid related tests and associated costs
- Personal gratuities (such as tips to porters etc.)
- All drinks not mentioned above in the "included" section (these can be charged to your room and paid when checking out)