

Volcanoes, Lakes & Gorillas

RWANDA

19 FEB, 10 NOV (2023), 20 JAN, 3 FEB (2024)

MAXIMUM GROUP SIZE 12

E-BIKES AS STANDARD

£3,995 PER PERSON

£1,350 GORILLA TREKKING

FLIGHTS EXCLUDED

An exceptional 7-night journey by e-bike and on foot from the capital Kigali, through tea and banana plantations and along a chain of lush volcanoes, to the shores of one of Africa's Great Lakes.

" In a world of package holidays to big tourist haunts this trip stood out like a beacon - full of adventure, exercise, fresh food, stunning scenery, wonderful locals. In a word, unique. "

Bob M.



THE SLOW CYCLIST

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Welcome to The Slow Cyclist



We believe in the power of slow travel to forge and strengthen friendships, change lives and be a force for good. That's why here at The Slow Cyclist we are dedicated to creating exceptional experiences for small, often private groups of friends or families to share.

We welcomed our first guests in 2015, but our story began six years earlier when, in October 2009, I jumped on a bike in London and began cycling alone to Australia to watch the Ashes cricket series. It took me 412 days which means that, by any definition, I am a bona fide 'slow cyclist.' That journey embedded in me a passion for two-wheeled exploration but it was in Kigali - where I spent two years running an unlikely project to build a home for cricket in Rwanda - that the seeds of a slow travel business were planted. Since 2015 we have hosted lots of lovely folks on cycling and walking holidays on three continents. Although we have always wanted to find special places to take our guests, we have never wanted to grow too fast, believing that slow, organic growth will mean better experiences for you. We never sell other people's trips; all are designed by us, always in places we've fallen for and we think you will too.

Rwanda is an astonishingly beautiful country; an area the size of Wales packed with volcanoes, lakes, countless friendly faces and of course, some of the last mountain gorillas on the planet. It's very special to me and I hope you enjoy your adventures there, just as I have over the years.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Oli Broom'.

Oli Broom
Founder & Managing Director

“ A quite extraordinary week. It will remain long in the memory bank. It was all totally magical and was beautifully organised. We loved your team. Jaco was inspiring, the locals charming, friendly. ”

Mark W.

“ A fabulous holiday. Rwanda is a beautiful country with wonderful people and cycling (on an e-bike) was the perfect way to see it. The whole of the slow cyclist team were brilliant. ”

Sally W.

Introduction

THE JOURNEY

Rwanda is a lush land of volcanoes, lakes and patchwork tea and banana plantations. Accompanied by our passionate and thoughtful local team, you will travel through the Land of a Thousand Hills all the way from its capital, Kigali, to Lake Kivu in the north-west of the country. Along the way you will learn about Rwanda's tragic recent past, explore much of its landmass by cycling along red dirt roads through villages perched on hillsides, visit inspiring community projects and get to know parts of this magnificent country that very few visitors ever see. Above all, this is an opportunity to switch off from normal life and move at your own pace through a land of staggering natural beauty and cultural fascination.

IS THIS JOURNEY FOR ME?

Slow Cyclists are curious travellers with a bit of juice in their legs, approaching their time with us an opportunity to explore rather than a test of fitness. That's not to say we don't pedal hard sometimes, just that we are often distracted by the food, history and people that make this place so special. When we see something interesting, we tend to stop and take it in rather than race by. If this sounds like your sort of holiday, we're pretty sure you'll love your time with us.

A FORCE FOR GOOD

You will, we hope, notice the number of locals and locally-run businesses we involve in your holiday. This is central to our values and, we believe, a vital component of slow travel. It means your money is staying in the communities you travel through. In addition, we have always supported local causes, donating to Rwandan charities since 2016. We now go further, committing to donate 1% of our revenues to causes we care about, and that are aligned with our values.



History of Rwanda



Rwanda is a land of sprawling lakes, cultivated green hills and smoking volcanoes made famous by *Gorillas in the Mist*. Of course, it's gorillas that most visitors come here to see - and they do provide a magical experience - but there is so much more to this tiny, lush, land-locked gem. The country remained 'undiscovered' until late in the 19th century, made up of a complex society of family clans. During German and then Belgian colonisation cash crops,

such as coffee and sugar, were introduced and schools and roads built. However, alongside came relentless social and political upheaval that continued into the post-colonial era and ultimately culminated in the 1994 genocide. Over the past two decades Africa's most densely populated country has embarked on a remarkable journey, winning global acclaim for tackling social divisions and dragging millions over the poverty line.

The population is young and a stable government has helped develop roads, create accessible broadband, and encourage a budding private sector economy that is seeing increasing foreign investment. Crime and corruption levels are some of the lowest on the continent and, in recent years, Rwanda has been named the safest country in Africa, with Kigali the cleanest and most liveable city.

Itinerary

DAYS 1 & 2 - ARRIVAL & A DAY IN KIGALI

Transfer 30 minutes

The best flights from the UK arrive in Kigali in the early evening. We will meet you and take you to your hotel, Heaven, in the leafy former Belgian quarter. A late dinner will be nearby. The following day will be spent in the capital, first at the Kigali Genocide Memorial, a harrowing experience that is a must for any first-time visitor. We'll then visit the Kinamba Project and have time to either relax or see a local market. In the evening, we'll have drinks, dinner and brief you on the adventure ahead.

DAY 3 - KIGALI TO KINIHIRA

Cycling 50 kms

We set off today from your hotel and pedal to the top of Kigali's highest peak, Mount Jali. It's often shrouded in mist, making for an atmospheric start to our journey, with views over the valleys coming into focus around every twist in the road. We'll have a picnic lunch en-route before a lengthy descent. It's one final climb up to Sorwathe, one of Rwanda's famous tea estates and our simple home for the night.

DAY 4 - KINIHIRA TO LAKE RUHONDO

Cycling 50 or 60 kms

After breakfast we'll have a chance to see behind the scenes at the tea plantation. Then it's back in the saddle for a fantastic descent through the tea fields before a steady climb to the shores of the Twin Lakes, Ruhondo and Burera. We'll stay in a friend's guest house with extraordinary views over Lake Ruhondo and the volcanoes. If it's a clear evening we'll be able to see the smoking, active Nyiragongo in Congo.

DAY 5 - LAKE RUHONDO TO RUHENGERI

Walking 2.5 hours - Cycling 32 kms

After a short boat journey to the north shore of Lake Ruhondo, we'll walk up to its twin, Burera, before climbing up to Virunga Lodge (see page 10) for lunch. Along the way we'll pass through villages and visit a vibrant community project. In the afternoon, the landscape changes on a fantastic ride as we head towards Kinigi, and finally the frontier town of Ruhengeri. We will spend two nights at La Locanda.

DAY 6 - GORILLA TREKKING

Today is your chance to trek into the jungle to spend time with gorillas. If you do not wish to trek to see gorillas there are other activities available (see Page 12).

DAY 7 - RUHENGERI TO RUBAVU

Cycling 85 kms

Our final destination is Lake Kivu, one of the deepest lakes in the world and a so-called Great Lake of Africa. To get there we will cycle along a chain of volcanoes, through bamboo forests, remote villages and banana plantations before stopping for lunch at the beautifully situated home of the late humanitarian and author Rosamond Carr. From there it's a thrilling descent and one last climb to reach Kivu, where we will spend the night at Kivu Paradis.

DAY 8 - DEPARTURE

After a slow morning we will drive you back to Kigali for your onward journey.

THE ROUTE

YOUR OVERNIGHT STAYS ARE MARKED WITH A RED DOT



On the Move



“ We had a wonderful time getting to know the team during our cycling days, listening to Jado's marvellous singing or their various translations en-route with the kids. The whole week was full of laughter and smiles. ”

Emma M.



ELECTRIC BIKES AS STANDARD

You will be cycling on and off-road, up and down plenty of hills, so we provide electric mountain bikes as standard. If you wish to use a regular mountain bike that's fine - we will supply those instead although please think carefully before choosing this option.



FLEXIBILITY

We believe that travel is at its best when flexible. There are very few people who are better suited to guiding you through the hills, valleys and villages of Rwanda. You will have experiences, see places and meet people that we have not listed here. It will be a journey of surprises! With that in mind, please treat this itinerary as a guide to how your week will unfold.

Finally, there may be occasions when, for good reason, we cannot fulfill every detail in this itinerary. Please treat distances as estimates as the routes may vary.

THE CYCLING & WALKING

The cycling in Rwanda is not technically difficult. It consists mostly of wide red dirt roads, with some tarmac sections. Cars are very few and far between, though you will get used to the familiar 'ring' of a bicycle taxi. This is the 'Land of a Thousand Hills' so it is important that you have good general fitness and are comfortable riding a bicycle on dirt roads, up and down hills. Whether you are a novice or experienced cyclist, our guides are skilled at spotting your ability and level of confidence and reacting accordingly. Walking routes take us up some steep goat tracks and along mountain ridges for beautiful views. Although some days are long, you'll always have time to take in the sights and there will always be someone travelling at your pace; this is a journey to take time over.

Practical Information



HOST, GUIDES & SUPPORT

Our attention to detail sets us apart. You will be accompanied by a member of The Slow Cyclist team from who will act as your host. In addition, you will be looked after by our local English-speaking guides and drivers throughout. We're sure you will become firm friends by the time you leave. Finally, your bags will be driven ahead each day and a support vehicle will be on hand (although never too close) in case you need a lift.



ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation is limited across Rwanda but we've chosen places that are as comfortable as each location offers. Some nights are more basic than others. More often than not the location will be stunning. We provide our own pillows, shampoos and soaps. Lodging is based on twin or double sharing although a single supplement is available. Rooms are en-suite where possible and WiFi or a good 4G connection is generally available overnight. Rest assured that you will always be well looked after.



FOOD & DRINK

Local food is simple and fresh and the very definition of organic. Rwanda is abundant in its vegetable growing, meaning vegetarians and vegans are easily catered for. Beer is brewed locally, though with the exception of 'banana wine', we provide South Africa wines. Sometimes we'll eat out in the open and, at other times, in local restaurants. During the day we provide local fruit and snacks. Allergies and other preferences are noted at the time of booking.



WHEN TO GO?

Although Rwanda is located only two degrees south of the equator, its high elevation makes the climate temperate. The average daily temperature near Lake Kivu, at an altitude of 1,450 metres, is 23 °C and this is relatively typical of temperatures across the country year round. The heavy rains of March to early May are the only time of year to avoid. The short rains during the European autumn (September to November) are a wonderful time to visit as sunshine is common and the landscape is at its most beautiful. December, January and February are also particularly beautiful, while July and August are hotter than other months.



Pricing & Booking

PRICE

£3,995 per person.

Included are:

- Group airport transfers (1 x arrival, 1 x departure)
- Support vehicle and luggage transfers
- TSC host & 3 x English-speaking local guides
- All accommodation, meals, snacks & drinks
- All activities
- Electric bike and helmet hire
- 100% financial security
- Donation to a local cause that is aligned with our values.

Flights, trekking permits, personal costs, travel insurance and visas (if required) are excluded.

OPTIONAL EXTRAS

Gorilla Trekking	£1,350 pp
Golden Monkey Trekking	£175 pp
Single Supplement	£450 pp



HOW TO BOOK & PAY

If you would like to book please visit [Find a Trip](#) on our website and choose the dates that suit. We require a 30% deposit at the time of booking. The balance is due 8 weeks before the start of your holiday.

SALES ENQUIRIES

Please call Oli Broom on +44 7540 441 485 or email oli@theslowcyclist.co.uk



POST-BOOKING

Soon after you have paid your deposit you will receive an email from us, notifying you of the receipt of funds. At this point you will be introduced to a member of our operations team in the UK who will be able to assist you with any questions in the lead up to your holiday. This may start with flight recommendations.

You will also be sent an Information Pack when you have booked and the trip details have been finalised. This will include packing and reading lists as well as a reminder of the details of your itinerary.

Gorilla Trekking (and other options)



For many visitors to Rwanda, a close encounter with a family of mountain gorillas is the wildlife experience of their lives. With that in mind, we have allowed for a day out of the saddle to trek into Volcanoes National Park and track some of nature's most majestic creatures. The cost, including 4WD transport, guides and porters, is £1,350 per person. The gorillas you will track in Volcanoes National Park belong to one of ten habituated family groups. Permits to visit the gorillas are in short supply, with a maximum of eight per day issued for each group. For many years, the gorilla groups have undergone an

extremely delicate process that has gradually got them used to the presence of humans and allowed a few privileged visitors to interact with them in the wild. These are not tame animals by any means. They are completely wild, and even now only tolerate human presence for an hour a day at most. You will be accompanied by guides as you track the gorillas through dense vegetation, along steep trails and at an altitude of more than 2,000 metres. It can be tough going but you are guaranteed to see the gorillas, whether it takes 30 mins or 3 hours to reach them. Once the group has been located

you will be allowed a maximum of one hour with them. After this, you will return to the park headquarters.

As a cheaper alternative to the gorillas, a trek to see golden monkeys is also fantastic. Each trek varies in length, but once you've found them you are allowed to spend an hour in their company. The all inclusive cost is £175 per person. Anyone not wishing to undertake either trek can explore Ruhengeri with a guide or relax after three long days in the saddle.

Getting to and from Rwanda



FLIGHTS

Arrangements

You are responsible for booking and paying for your own flights to and from Rwanda. If you would like help researching and booking your flights we recommend contacting Bob Peters, who is familiar with Rwanda flight schedules. His contact details are bob.peters@travelcounsellors.com or +44 7894 221 703.

Recommendations

Many airlines service Kigali, Rwanda's capital, from the UK and around the world. Most of our guests fly with Brussels Airlines or KLM because the flights land in the early evening, allowing for dinner and a good night's sleep before a day exploring Kigali on Day 1. However Kenya Airways, Ethiopian Airlines, Turkish Airlines and Qatar Airways provide a range of service options.

TRANSFERS

We will provide free transfers for all members of the party on Days 1 & 8.

If you would like us to help with your transfer to or from Kigali International Airport outside of the these days we will be happy to do so, but will not be able to provide a free service.

Please just ask at any point in the lead up to your time with us.

Our Values & Recommended Reading



OUR VALUES

Although it's our focus, we don't just want to run great trips. We want to be part of a generation of travellers - and travel companies - that leave behind a healthy, happy planet for our children and future generations to enjoy. Our values guide us to this end.

- 1. Passionate about creating exceptional shared experiences.** It's what we do. We act with integrity, focus on the detail and make our guests happy.
- 2. Advocates for a slower future.** Our name gives us away. We believe in a considered, meaningful and ultimately more rewarding way of going about things.
- 3. Positively impact the people and communities whose lives we touch.** A vital component of any travel, but too often ignored. We work creatively to make sure everyone we work with, and every community we work alongside, benefits.
- 4. Take action to care for the natural world.** Travel is a major contributor to climate change and the worldwide loss of biodiversity. It doesn't have to be, so we take steps to mitigate our impact.

For more information on our values, or to discuss them in detail, feel free to contact Oli Broom - oli@theslowcyclist.co.uk. 1% of The Slow Cyclist revenues go to causes we care about, and that are aligned with our values. Follow our blog to keep abreast of where the money goes.



RWANDAN READS

Land of Second Chances by Tim Lewis The author's first book is a tale of hope and redemption. Adrien Niyonshuti is a member of the Rwandan cycling team. He was seven years old when he lost his family in the genocide that tore his country apart. Almost twenty years later he had a shot at representing his country at the London Olympics in 2012.

We Wish To Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families by Philip Gourevitch In April 1994, the Rwandan government called upon everyone in the Hutu majority to kill every member of the Tutsi minority. Philip Gourevitch's haunting work is an anatomy of the war in Rwanda, a vivid history of the tragedy's background, and an unforgettable account of its aftermath.

Shake Hands with The Devil by Romeo Dallaire When he was called on to serve as force commander of the UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda, Romeo Dallaire believed that his assignment was to help two warring parties achieve the peace they both wanted. Instead, he was exposed to the most barbarous and chaotic display of civil war and genocide in the past decade.

When The Hills Ask for Your Blood by David Belton Former BBC Newsnight producer Belton, one of the first journalists into Rwanda in 1994, tells of the horrors he experienced. He follows the lives of a few of those caught up in the genocide and he revisits a country still marked with blood in search of those who survived and the legacy of those who did not.



“ I regard us as very fortunate and privileged to have spent a few days in Rwanda and seeing something of the place and it's people supported by you and your team. Nothing was too much trouble and you made things happen effortlessly. I'm not a cyclist but it's the only way to really experience a place... and I was struck coming back from Kivu how detached I felt from the place travelling in a car. ”

John L.



THE SLOW CYCLIST