Rwanda Rising - Gravel Biking Adventure in Western Rwanda

Trip Code: PXGG

Version:

PIONEER	GUIDED GROUP	CHALLENGING
		8



HIGHLIGHTS

- Ride on dirt tracks through the many and varied patchwork landscapes of Rwanda, including rainforests, tea plantations and shimmering lakeshores.
- Relive a lap of the 2025 UCI World Championships course on partially closed roads, a dream

experience for any cycling fan.

- 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.
- Book onto an optional day gorilla trekking through rainforest in the Volcanoes NP, to spend some time with a band of wild mountain gorillas in their verdant volcano-side home. **Enquire at time of booking.**

AT A GLANCE

- 11 days gravel biking over 380km
- Optional gorilla trekking
- Wildlife canopy walk
- All National Park Fees included
- 50% vehicle support
- 85% dirt roads
- Max altitude 2,700 m
- Join at Kigali

ACCOMMODATIONS & MEALS

VIEW DATES, PRICES & BOOK YOUR HOLIDAY HERE

Introduction

In the land of a thousand hills, the minor 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, carrying goods, and each other on trusty 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 380km of point-to-point cycling, starts in the nation's capital, before heading out for a loop of the Western half of Rwanda. We pass through the wildlife thrum of Nyungwe Forest National Park, 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.

Is this holiday for you?

This is a gravel cycling trip with 8 days back to back riding over 380 kms. There will be considerable climbing and descending, over 10,000m 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 which will tire us quicker than perhaps we are used to in more temperate climes. 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 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. In Volcanoes National Park, if we choose to purchase gorilla experience permits at the time of booking, 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 NP will even offer a hand to hold on technical ground.

Itinerary

Version:

Holiday Information

What's Included

- A professional, qualified and English speaking cycling leader
- A single timed airport transfer on arrival & departure
- All accommodation as described
- 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
- Rwandan Visa
- 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
- Gorilla trekking - please enquire at time of booking to secure your permit

Joining Arrangements & Transfers

Travelling to your Destination

If flying from the UK there are low cost airlines available to the start and from the end of your holiday.

To benefit from full financial protection, ease your holiday planning, and avoid dealing with airlines, we can book scheduled flights from the UK as part of a flight inclusive package. Scheduled flights are usually more expensive that low cost alternatives, however potentially less stressful if your flight is cancelled or delayed. If you book flights through KE Adventure Travel we will offset the carbon of your flight.

The group will meet at the lodge 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.

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

Meal Plan

All meals are included except for all of our meals on day 1 and our evening meal on day 8. In Kigali there are many restaurants to entertain, or we can take dinner at the lodge. The dinner not included on day 8 will be taken at a local restaurant.

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, 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.

Accommodation

Accommodation on this trip is mostly lodges with one night in an incredible canopy campsite in the beautiful Nyungwe National Park.

On the majority of nights including our first night in Kigali, along the shores of Lake Kivu, and our final nights in Musanze, we will stay in comfortable lodges sometimes with pools and great views of the surrounding hills and often the lake.

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.

If you are travelling solo, 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

If you wish to join the optional gorilla trekking you will need to apply for this at the time of booking. We cannot guarantee availability of these permits, as their availability is limited and sells out quickly. To avoid disappointment, early booking is essential. The permit costs $1,100*. Should you wish to join this experience, inform the sales team and an application for a permit will be made on your behalf, upon completion of your booking. If the sales team require any further details to complete the application, they will be in contact. All other fees to enter national parks are included in the trip price.

*subject to change

Spending Money

We recommend £400 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. ATMs 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 100m 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 gravel bikes available as standard and short travel hardtail mountain bikes available for an extra fee. These will be Giant Revolt Advanced 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 GRX 2x10 speed mechanical or similar, and brakes are hydraulic Shimano GRX or similar. Forks are rigid with plenty of clearance, wheels are robust and aluminium and are shod with 40mm tyres for plenty of grip on all surfaces. Hire cost: $495 for the duration of the trip payable on arrival (preferably by card). Short travel hardtail MTBs available for $539.

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 lodge (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

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 be up to date with the routine vaccinations recommended in the UK for overseas travel.

You must also contact your doctor or travel clinic to check if there are specific vaccinations or other preventive measures that you need for the area you are visiting, in good time before you are due to depart.

Please ensure you are looking at the recommendations for all countries visited on your holiday plus recommendations for any borders you cross.

On holidays to more remote areas you should also have a dental check-up.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct travel documents including vaccinations and health certificates.

Please check the FCDO and Travel Health Pro. For all of your intended destinations for up-to-date advice.

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.

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 and read the FCDO Travel Advice for their chosen destination. All other nationalities should check their government websites for relevant information.

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

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, insect repellent 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.

Land Only Information

The LAND ONLY dates and prices are for the itinerary, joining and ending in Kigali. For clients making their own flight arrangements, Kigali International Airport is the most convenient for transfers to and from the group hotel.

Why Choose KE

Why KE?

This pioneering trip is the first foray for KE into the heart of Africa on two wheels. We have created an itinerary that finds some of the best gravel biking routes in the country, providing short but demanding, and incredibly rewarding stages.We've also left space in the itinerary for us to explore some of the wildlife rich national parks of this beautiful country, including a canopy bridge walk experience within the cloud forest of Nyungwe National Park, surrounded by turacos, colobus monkeys, and many other incredible ancient forest species.

Please Note This document was downloaded on 11/11/2026 and the trip is subject to change