

## REPUBLIC OF RWANDA



## GENERAL DIRECTORATE OF IMMIGRATION AND EMIGRATION

### GENERAL INFORMATION

#### 1.1 RWANDAN CUSTOMS AND LAWS

An understanding of Rwandan customs and laws will help you to adjust to life in our community and make the most of your stay.

Rwanda is a safe country. You should feel free to move around on foot or by public transport, even in the evenings. If you ask for directions people will always do their best to help you.

Many people, especially in Kigali, understand English and French. Many older people, especially outside Kigali, are able to speak French. Try and learn one or two greetings in Kinyarwanda. Your efforts will be greatly appreciated wherever you go.

Rwanda is largely a homogenous society in which most of its population shares the same language and culture with only slight differences from one province to another. However over its history many Rwandans have lived out of Rwanda and been exposed to different cultures. This has enhanced the richness and diversity of Rwandan culture.

This diversity of experience amongst the Rwandan population means that there is a good understanding about the cultures of many of the foreign visitors to Rwanda. Rwandans like and welcome all who come and visit. Rwandans are tolerant and interested in newcomers to their country.

In Rwanda every one is free within the law, to express and maintain their own culture and their own religious traditions all visitors are invited to participate as a member of Rwandan society. We are a predominantly Christian community and we respect the views and traditions of other religious communities.

If you are open and respectful towards the ideas and traditions of others you are likely to fit into our society, enjoy and be successful in your new life.

Rwanda does not tolerate corruption of any kind. Do not, ever, offer a bribe or try and obtain preferential treatment for public services. You are most unlikely to come across any corruption in Rwanda, and you will insult people (and embarrass yourself) if you seem to expect it.

Rwandans work long hours. In government departments the working day begins for everybody at 7.00 am. Most businesses are at work by 8.00 am.

Like anywhere else in the World be cautious before taking photographs of people who you do not know. Often people are willing to be photographed, but some prefer not to be. Always ask permission to avoid causing any inconvenience.

Children will often approach visitors to Rwanda and ask for money or gifts. This behavior is discouraged. As you will notice Rwanda is embarked on universal nine years basic education (9YBE). If you give them money then the children will be encouraged in this behavior, so please do not give anything. The government of Rwanda's stand on this is that they should be no children on the street asking for money. The government of Rwanda has created rehabilitation and vocational skills development centre so that those street children and beggars could learn vocational skills, become employable and leave the street. Rather Rwanda is known to be the country where visitors are welcomed with enthusiasm, smile, and affectionate hospitality. So please wherever you find children begging be aware that that is not our culture.

In Rwanda there no clear principles regarding leaving a tip in Restaurant, Bar or Hotel. However the tendency is that because customers visiting Rwanda have been giving tips to staffs servicing them, in bigger hotels and restaurant it has become a culture. On how much to give in tip, there is no fixed amount; it depends on who is giving it.

## **1.2 EQUALITY AND ANTI DISCRIMINATION**

You have the right to be respected and to have your needs considered on the same basis as every one else. You are of course required to respect other people whether they have been born in Rwanda or elsewhere and have come as a migrant like you.

The Rwandan Constitution embraces equality amongst all citizens as a core value of Rwandan society. Anti-genocide laws prohibit any act that seeks to discriminate against any individual or group of people.

Individual religious and cultural practices are allowed but must conform to existing Rwandan law. For example Rwanda prohibits gender based violence in any situation including private homes and any one who encounters such problems should report it to the responsible police unit. Toll free telephone number is 3512.

## **1.3 DRIVING**

To drive a car in Rwanda you must have a driving license (see below for further information about recognition of foreign driving licenses) and the vehicle you are driving must be registered with the competent government authority. Disobeying or breaking traffic laws can result in big fines, loss of your driving license or even imprisonment.

Using a mobile phone while driving is prohibited unless you do so using a hands free kit. The laws are particularly strict regarding speed limits and driving while having taken alcohol. The speed limit in towns is 40 km/h and the speed limit going in provinces is 60 km/h. It is

prohibited to drive while having taken more than 0.8 mg of alcohol per 1 liter of blood. It is discouraged to drive while having taken alcohol. If suspected of driving while drunken, you are tested and if found that you have more than 0.8 mg of alcohol per 1 ml of blood; you are punishable of imprisonment from 3 days up to 6 months maximum.  
For more information about licenses and motor vehicle registration please see below.

#### **1.4 DRUGS, SMOKING AND DRINKING**

The penal code prohibits illicit drug usage, trafficking and possession.  
Smoking tobacco in public is not allowed. It is considered to be impolite to smoke in the public especially in the cities.

However, traditionally most old Rwandan men smoked tobacco but as the time goes on this is decreasing.

Being drunk in the public place is not acceptable.  
Few women in Rwanda do take alcohol.

#### **1.5 THE ENVIROMENT**

Protection of the natural environment and cleanliness in public places are very important to Rwandans.

It is illegal to use or import plastic bags. Rwanda as the country of a thousand hills gives priority to the prevention of soil erosion and the conservation of flora is a priority. Rwanda has a tree planting week every year and it is prohibited to uproot any tree without permission. Hunting and fishing must be done in a regulated manner. There are also special rules that apply to national parks to ensure sustainable development. When visiting parks please enquire about local rules and observe them.

For further information about visits to our national parks, please contact RDB at [www.rdb.rw](http://www.rdb.rw)

For further information about the environment in Rwanda contact

#### **RWANDA ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY (REMA)**

Kacyiru District  
Kigali City  
Rwanda  
B.P 7436 Kacyiru

Fixed/Landline phone number: +250(0)252580101

Website : [www.rema.gov.rw](http://www.rema.gov.rw)

#### **1.6 NOISE**

Cities regulate excess an unnecessary noise by prohibiting dancing and other loud noise in public places.

There are many clubs for those who enjoy dancing but these have minimum standards to protect sound transmission. Generally neighbours are tolerant to occasional noise such as wedding celebrations, but if it is excessive or recurrent a complaint you may call the police.

### **1.7 RESPONSIBILITY AND VALUES**

The freedom we enjoy in Rwanda depends on everyone fulfilling their civic responsibilities. We expect newcomers to support our democratic way of life and respect our laws and freedom. Values of the dignity of every person, gender equality and equity, and tolerance, fairness and compassion for those in need are amongst important values to us.

### **1.8 MEETING PEOPLE AND COMMUNICATION**

When meeting someone for the first time it is usual to shake right hands and exchange a greeting in one of the most spoken languages i.e. Kinyarwanda, French or English. On parting again shake right hands. For those with whom you are particularly familiar and have not met for some time you will usually embrace one another for a short time and then exchange greetings. For social conversation between people who know each other, it is polite to ask how they are and how their family is before going on to the rest of conversation (but this is a fading culture). For official business after greeting you go straight to the point of the conversation. Amongst the younger generation and with peers they may also exchange kisses. Try and use one or two Kinyarwanda greetings. Your efforts will be greatly appreciated.

### **1.9 STREET SAFETY**

Rwanda and Kigali are safer places to go around individually or in group, day or night. However one is asked to take care of personal belongings, not to leave things like computers, photo cameras and mobile telephones in an open area. So that people can avoid being victims of opportunistic thefts.

### **1.10 POLITE BEHAVIOR**

**Food:** Workers and business people almost always stop work and eat lunch at home or in licensed premises. It is considered impolite to eat in public while standing, or walking. It is accepted that some foreigners may eat whilst walking, but you will blend in better if you avoid eating in the street. Bars in Rwanda serve goat meat in a well liked meat “BROCHETTE”, but also Brochette might be of fish, beef and any other meat. Please do ask of the kind Brochette you are going to be served.

**Gestures:** It is considered important to say bon appétit, enjoy your meal or something similar to others eating with you before you commence your own meal.

It is considered polite to carry food in a bag not openly.

It is also seen to be impolite to point to someone with one finger only. We point using all five fingers.

To beckon someone in Rwanda, it is discouraged; you better call the person by name and talk to him or her.

### **1.11 CLOTHING**

Rwanda is a country where people wear a variety of clothing. In the office people wear reasonably formal clothing. At weekends people wear casual clothes. It is not usual to wear clothes which expose too much of a person's body.

When people attend church or on special occasion people wear some of their smartest clothes, often choosing traditional styles.

### **1.12 RWANDAN TIME**

Rwandan respect time, However priority may be given to important events which have not been planned for. This can affect their management of time so when attending an appointment allow a few extra minutes in case the meeting does not commence exactly on schedule or is not completed within the planned period.

Serious efforts are made, in the public sector and other major organizations to have activities commence at the appointed time.

### **1.13 RWANDAN PUBLIC HOLIDAY SYSTEM**

The following are public holiday dates in Rwanda:

- 1st January : New Year 's Day
- 1st February : Heroes day
- 7<sup>th</sup> April : Genocide Memorial Day. Followed by a memorial week  
Good Friday which has no specific day and date
- 1<sup>st</sup> May : Labour Day
- 1<sup>st</sup> July : Independence Day
- 4<sup>th</sup> July : Liberation Day
- 15<sup>th</sup> August : Assumption Day
- 25<sup>th</sup> December: Christmas Day
- Eid El-Fitr : which has no specific day and date

Other public holidays may be announced by the cabinet of ministers or the Ministry of Public Service and Labour

### **1.14 TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

Rwanda's international code is +250. Telephone operators in Rwanda are 3: MTN, TIGO and RWANDATEL. The TIGO numbers start with 072, MTN numbers start with 078 and for RWANDATEL start with 075 for mobile and 0252 for fixed or land line. The telephone numbers in Rwanda have 10 digits, please wherever you meet a telephone number with less than 10 digits number; if it is MTN phone number add 78 in between the first 0 and the number which follows. If it is a RWANDATEL fixed or landline phone number you will have to add 0252 in front of the written phone number. Examples if it is a MTN number 08566541,

it will be 0788566541. RWANDATEL with fixed or landline phone number 578516, they have changed to 0252578516. The TIGO numbers did not change, so you do not have to add in any number.

## 1.15 LANGUAGE

Rwanda has 3 official languages which are Kinyarwanda, English and French. In most of the public institutions, English and Kinyarwanda are the languages used. But French is still the easiest language for many people particularly outside Kigali although this is changing. Swahili is also spoken in cities.

## 1.16 VOLUNTARY WORK OR CHARITABLE GIVING

In Rwanda, the community at the Umudugudu level organizes an activity every last Saturday of the month called Umuganda where the community clean their Umudugudu and discuss development of their umudugudu. In most places the discussions are held in Kinyarwanda but neighbours will translate for foreigners. The day of Umuganda all the businesses close until lunch time. For those foreigners who wish to conduct more voluntary or charitable work please contact the district or sector (umurenge) officials for information or directives.

## 1.17 BASIC WORDS IN KINYARWANDA

Kinyarwanda, the Rwanda mother tongue is spoken in all part of Rwanda. To give you basic words of our beautiful language you might later want to learn here are some basic words in Kinyarwanda.

### GREETINGS

Good Morning : Mwaramutse (ho).  
Good Afternoon : Mwiriwe (ho)  
Good evening: Mwiriwe (ho)  
Good night : Ijoro ryiza/ muramukeho

### Quick References

Do you speak English? Uvuga icyongereza?  
Where can I find ...? Ni he nabona ...?  
Where can I buy ...? Ni he nagura ...?  
How much does it cost? N' angahe?

What does this mean? Ibi bisobanura iki?  
When does ... open? Bakingura ... ryari?  
When does ... close? Bakinga ... ryari?  
What time is it? Ni gihe ki?  
Where are the toilets? Aho kwituma ?  
Thank you very much Urakoze cyane.  
You are welcome. Murakaza neza.  
Goodbye (am) Mwirirwe (ho)  
Goodbye (pm) Muramuke (ho)  
Goodbye (Longtime) Urabeho

### BASIC EXPRESSION

Thank you: Urakoze  
Yes: Yee!  
No: Oya!  
Excuse me: Mbabarira

### SMALL COMMAND

Stand up. Haguruka  
Sit down. Icara  
Come here. Ngwino hano.  
Go there. Genda /Jya hariya.  
Bring it to me. ...nzanira.  
Let me see. Reka ndebe.  
Come with me. Ngwino tujyane.  
Talk to me. Mbwira.  
Go home. Jya mu rugo. / Taha/ Jya i muhira.  
Listen to me. Nyumva/Ntega amatwi.  
Speak slowly. Vuga buhoro buhoro.  
Can you help me? Wamfasha ...?

See you soon. Ni aho mu kanya

### 1.18 HOW TO OPEN A BUSINESS IN RWANDA

In Rwanda, to open business it just require 1 day. All the requirements and applications required are made at one stop centre which is located at the Rwanda Development Board head office.

#### **Rwanda Development Board (RDB)**

Gishushu, Nyarutarama Road.

P.O. Box 6239 Kigali, Rwanda

Email: [info@rdb.rw](mailto:info@rdb.rw)

### 1.19 OTHERS SOURCES OF INFORMATION IN RWANDA

- ✚ For any other information about Life in Kigali and in Rwanda, please subscribe to **KIGALI LIFE YAHOO GROUP**.

KIGALI LIFERS exchange information about how:

- To find accommodation in Kigali
- To find house staffs like cooks, cleaners and guards
- To find furniture
- Place to go for cinema, camping,
- And many other information about Life in Kigali and in Rwanda

#### ✚ **THE EYE MAGAZINE**

The Eye Magazine is an Insiders Guide to Rwanda, which is a trimester private magazine that provides information of tourism and business purposes to travelers in Rwanda. The EYE MAGAZINE is a free of charge magazine available at hotels in Rwanda.

The magazine has a website: [www.theeye.co.rw](http://www.theeye.co.rw)

The Eye Magazine operate at  
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