

# Birds and mammals of Rwanda's National Parks

Rwanda is a small country which equates to around a fifth the size of England. Despite this the country is blessed with extensive areas of forest, lakes and swamps which in turn attract a wide number of birds and mammals. Rwanda is a wonderful destination for wildlife tourism and an excellent area to watch Mountain Gorillas. Our tour visits Akagera National Park, a mix of wetlands and forest and the bird-rich Nyungwe Forest National Park. We expect to see almost twenty-five of the range-restricted Albertine Rift endemics. Birding within Rwanda is still in its infancy and this tour could well bring a few surprise species within the extensive forest systems.

**Days 1-2:** We have a flight to Kigali, the capital of Rwanda. On arrival transfer to Akagera National Park in eastern Rwanda which is close to the border with Tanzania. En route we should encounter the commoner birds of the countryside – Hamerkop, Sacred and Hadada Ibis, Augur Buzzard, Long-crested Eagle, Village, Black-headed and Vieillot's Black Weavers. The journey passes through large tracts of agricultural areas where Grey-backed Fiscals reside whilst patches of marsh and reeds attract Fan-tailed Widowbird and Carruther's Cisticolas. Three nights at Akagera Lodge.

**Days 3-4:** Akagera National Park was founded in 1934 to protect animals and other wildlife using a mixed combination of gallery forest, swamps and lakes. Almost 500 bird species can be found in the park. A boat trip on Lake Ihema should reward us with views of Rufous-bellied Heron, and papyrus-loving Lesser and Greater Swamp Warblers, Slender-billed Weaver, and Swamp Flycatcher. The lakes also offer us the chance of Shoebill although this species has become scarce here in recent years. Other species we may see include Goliath, Black-headed, Striated, and Squacco Herons, Little Bittern, Grey-crowned Crane, African Openbill, African Darter, Black Crake, Wattled, Long-toed and Senegal Lapwings, Water Thick-knee, Blue-headed Coucal, and Giant Kingfisher. In the forests and savannah we have a chance of locating Black-chested, Brown,

## Dates

**Saturday December 1st - Thursday December 13th 2018**

Leaders: Harriet Kemishiga and local guides

Group Size: 8

Birds: 300-350

and Western Banded Snake Eagles, White-headed Vulture, Ross's Turaco, Black-colored and Red-faced Barbets, Bennett's Woodpecker, Bare-faced Go-away Bird, and Klaas's, Red-chested, and Black Cuckoos. In the grasslands we search for Black-bellied Bustard, Red-necked Francolin, Red-billed and occasionally Cardinal Queleas.

**Day 5:** Transfer to Nyungwe Forest National Park. En route stops at papyrus swamps may produce Papyrus Gonolek, White-winged Warbler and the uncommon Papyrus Canary. In roadside marshes a search for another rare regional endemic – Grauer's Swamp Warbler. Arrive at Nyungwe Top View Hotel, our base for four nights.

**Days 6-8:** The next few days are spent exploring the forests of Nyungwe. Within the reserve several well maintained trails allow access to this extensive forest – one of the largest remaining within Africa. Albertine Rift endemics occurring in Nyungwe include Handsome Francolin,

Great Blue and Ruwenzori Turacos, White-headed Wood-hoopoe, Barred Long-tailed Cuckoo, Chestnut Owlet, Olive and Elliot's Woodpeckers, Stripe-breasted Tit, Red-collared Babbler, Archer's and White-bellied Robin Chats, Doherty's Bush-Shrike, Mountain Masked, Black-faced, Chestnut-throated, and Collared Apalises, Rwenzori Batis, Short-tailed Warbler, White-tailed Blue-flycatcher, Chapin's Flycatcher, and Purple-breasted and Regal Sunbirds. Birding in dense forest can be challenging but a wide-range of birds is possible. We should encounter Black-and-white Casqued Hornbills, Cinnamon-chested Bee-eaters, Pink-footed Puffback and more skulking species in the form of African Hill Babbler, Dusky Crimsonwing and Grauer's Warbler

**Day 9:** From Nyungwe we travel north to Lake Kivu where we embark on a cruise to Napoleon and Bat Islands. The shores of Lake Kivu offer us African Fish Eagle, African Harrier Hawk, African Hobby, Brimstone Canary, Lesser-striped and Red-rumped Swallows, Malachite and Pied Kingfishers, Green-headed, Bronze, Red-chested and Scarlet-chested Sunbirds. On our return we transfer to Rwiza Village where we overnight.

**Day 10:** Today we continue northwards to Gisenyi, birding en route with stopovers at wetlands and along the shore. The Gishwati Forest is close by another excellent area for forest birds. Several specialties occur within the forest including Ruwenzori Turaco, Western Green Tinkerbird, Mountain Boubou, Doherty's Bushshrike, Ruwenzori Batis, Black-faced Prinia, White-browed Crombec, Strange Weaver, Blue-headed, Regal and Purple-breasted Sunbirds. Raptors may include Cassin's Hawk Eagle, whilst woodpeckers using the forest comprise Green-backed, Golden-crowned and Olive.

**Day 11:** Continue north to Volcanoes National Park which is on the border with Congo and Uganda. The skyline is dominated by the area's towering peaks which can be seen on a clear day. A stop at a patch of forest just outside the reserve may



**Green Woodhoopoe** Photo: Roger Ridley

be fruitful for Narina's Trogon and White-eyed Slaty Flycatcher. Two nights at Davinci Lodge

**Day 12:** Today has been set aside to track Mountain Gorillas (this is only an option) otherwise we go birding in the forests for the day. Within the lodge grounds, tangles of vegetation attract Cinnamon Bracken Warbler, Black-crowned Waxbill, Pin-tailed Whydah, Streaky Seedeater, and Variable Sunbird.

**Day 13:** Today we return to Kigali where the tour concludes in time to connect with international flights home.

## Prices

Ground Price: £3,595  
 Single room: £420  
 Deposit: £350  
 \*Air Fare: £800

This holiday is fully inclusive of accommodation and meals, transport, guidance and taxes.

**Not included:** drinks, insurance, airport departure taxes and items of a personal nature. Visa to enter Rwanda.

*\*Please refer to our terms and conditions relating to flights*