

Rwanda Bike

Kigali to Congo, cycle towards the 'Land of a Thousand Hills'



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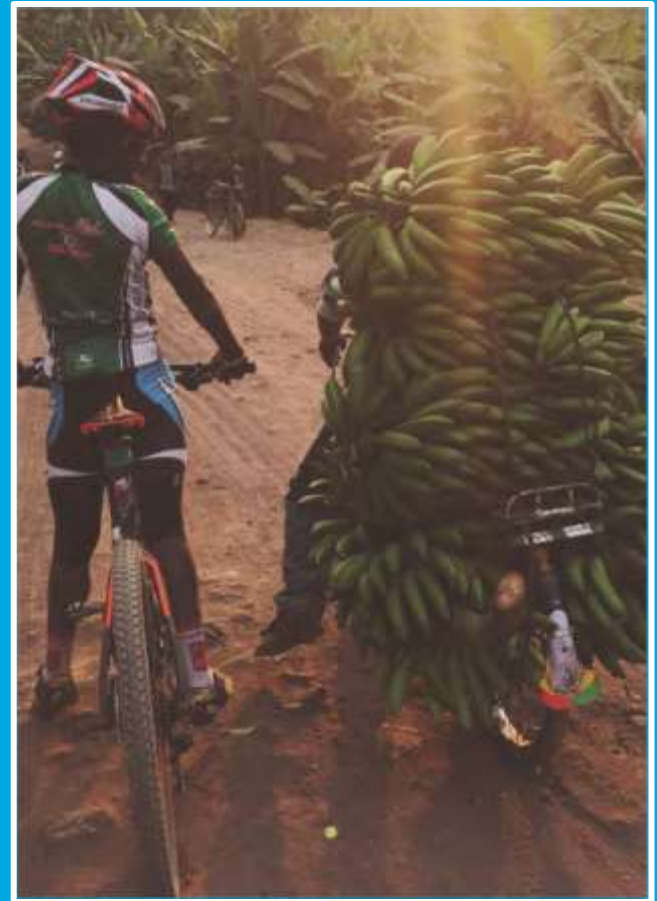
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Kigali to Congo, Rwanda

Cycle towards the 'Land of a Thousand Hills'

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. For much of the post-colonial era the country faced relentless social and political upheaval, culminating in the 1994 genocide. But over the past two decades Africa's most densely populated country has embarked on a remarkable journey, winning global acclaim for tackling ethnic divisions and dragging millions off the poverty line. The population is young and a stable government has helped develop roads, create accessible and in recent years Rwanda has been named the safest country in Africa, and Kigali the cleanest and most liveable city on the continent.

Join this 220km journey on dirt roads through some of Africa's most awe-inspiring scenery, from Rwanda's capital to one of the continent's great lakes on its northern border with the Democratic Republic of Congo. We will ride towards the mountainous north of the country through tea plantations, lush green hills and along the Virunga Mountains - a chain of volcanoes that are home to some of the world's last remaining mountain gorillas; all the way to the border with the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Nicknamed the 'Land of a Thousand Hills,' Rwanda doesn't do 'flat' meaning this challenge will offer not only incredible views around every corner, but a serious test of fitness and endurance with daily climbs in excess of 1000 metres.



Detailed itinerary

Day 1: Depart London to Rwanda

Depart London for flight to Kigali the capital city of Rwanda. Met on arrival and transferred to our accommodation.

Day 2: Free day in Kigali

Today is a day in Kigali to acclimatise. A visit to the Genocide Memorial Museum is a must for any visitor to Rwanda. In the evening, after a bike fitting, we will have dinner at a local restaurant.

Day 3: Kigali to kinihira

Distance: 45kms

Your adventure really begins today, from the hotel we are ascending the first big hill to the top of Kigali's highest peak, Mount Jali. Up high it's often shrouded in mist early in the morning and it makes for a magical start to your journey as you ride a series of ridges dotted with villages and views around every bend that will characterize much of the day's ride. You'll have a barbecue lunch in a village en-route before a long descent into lush tea plantations. Then it's one final climb up to Sorwathe, one of Rwanda's most charming tea estates, and your home for the night.

Day 4: Kinihira to Lake Ruhondo

Distance: 50kms

Sorwathe is home to 668 acres of tea fields that produce 20% of Rwanda's tea and after breakfast you will have a chance to witness what goes on behind the scenes. Then it's back in the saddle for a fantastic descent to tea plantations before a steady ascent to the shores of the Twin Lakes, Burera and Ruhondo. It's a day packed with breath-taking views but you will have to work hard in the saddle to achieve them. With heavily cultivated terraced hillsides and plenty of attention from curious villagers, your sense of adventure and endurance will definitely be tested. Your overnight stay is at a lake-side guest house with staggering views, and if it's a clear evening you'll be able to see the smoking, active Nyiragongo volcano in over the border in Congo.



Day 5: Lake Ruhondo to Ruhengeri

Distance: 50kms

After a short boat journey, today's ride will begin on the northern shore of Lake Ruhondo and it's a tough morning as you climb steadily until lunch at Virunga Lodge. It's one of Africa's most celebrated safari camps, fringed by towering volcanoes. In the afternoon you will ride west across volcanic plains towards Kinigi, where you will visit the home of the Rwandan national cycling team and get a fascinating glimpse into the set-up. From Kinigi it is a short ride downhill to the frontier town of Ruhengeri, where you will have dinner and spend the night at a lovely family home.



Detailed itinerary

Day 6: Ruhengeri to Rubavu

Distance: 90kms

It's your last day on bikes. It's a big one and one of our favourite days on a bike anywhere in the world. Your final destination is Lake Kivu, one of the deepest lakes in the world and a so-called Great Lake. To get there you will cycle along the base of the chain of volcanoes, pausing for lunch at the beautifully situated home of American former humanitarian and author Rosamund Carr. From there it's a thrilling 30 kilometre downhill through bustling villages towards Kivu for a celebratory dip in the lake, and a fireside dinner to celebrate your epic achievement.

Day 7: Rubavu to Kigali

After a morning recuperating and relaxing by Lake Kivu you will be transferred 3 hours by minibus to Kigali for your onward journey. For those catching an evening flight out of Rwanda we will drive you to Kigali International Airport.

Day 8: Depart for London

Arrive London.

Additional day 6: Rest day

Volcanoes National Park is home to one of the world's most celebrated and endangered creatures, the mountain gorilla. Today is your chance to trek into the jungle to spend an hour with some of the last remaining majestic mountain gorillas on the planet. Alternatively, you can visit golden monkeys in the same forest. Each trek begins early in the morning and can last for several hours. For those who do not wish to visit either, our guides will be on hand to show you some interesting things around Ruhengeri. These often need to be planned at the last minute but activities may include a visit to a local witch-doctor, natural spring or a ride on the 2015 Africa Continental Mountain Bike Championships course. In the evening you will have dinner at a local restaurant and we suggest an early night for a big final day.

This day incurs an additional cost.



Challenge grade

This challenge does not require advanced technical mountain biking ability although experience riding on rough surfaces up and downhill will be helpful. Far more important is your fitness. You will definitely need to train for this challenge and by the time you join us in Rwanda you should be happy spending long hours in the saddle for three or four days in a row, climbing in excess of 1,000 metres each day on a variety of surfaces.

Best time of year

All year-round (except April)

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This itinerary is complex and subject to change