

Birds and mammals of Rwanda's National Parks

Rwanda is quite small, covering an area of around one fifth the size of England. Despite its small size the country is blessed with extensive areas of forest, lakes and swamps which in turn attract a wide species of birds and mammals. Rwanda is a wonderful destination for wildlife tourism and an excellent location to watch Mountain Gorillas. Our tour visits Akagera National Park, which has a mix of wetlands and forest, and the bird-rich Nyungwe Forest National Park. We expect to see almost 25 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 with arrival on Day 2. 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, including Hamerkop, African Sacred and Hadada Ibis, Augur Buzzard, Long-crested Eagle, and Village, Black-headed and Vieillot's Black Weavers. The road passes through large tracts of agricultural areas where Grey-backed Fiscal resides, whilst patches of marsh and reeds attract Fan-tailed Widowbird and Carruther's Cisticola. We spend four nights at Akagera Lodge.

Days 3-5: 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 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 and Western

Dates

TOUR A: Saturday January 15th – Thursday January 27th 2022

TOUR B: Saturday January 14th – Thursday January 26th 2023

Leader: A leader from Birdwatching Breaks and local guides

Group Size: 8

Birds: 300–350

Banded Snake Eagles, White-headed Vulture, Ross's Turaco, Black-collared 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 resident Black-bellied Bustard, Red-necked Francolin, and Red-billed and occasionally Cardinal Queleas.

Day 6: 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 we search for another rare regional endemic – Grauer's Swamp Warbler. Arrive at Nyungwe Top View Hotel, which is our base for five nights.

Days 7-10: The next few days are spent exploring the forests of Nyungwe. Within the reserve several well-maintained trails allow access to this extensive forest, which is one



Grey-crowned Cranes

Photo: Jo Finn

of the largest remaining in Africa. Albertine Rift endemics occurring in Nyungwe include Handsome Francolin, Great Blue and Ruwenzori Turacos, White-headed Woodhoopoe, Barred Long-tailed Cuckoo, Chestnut Owllet, Olive and Elliot's Woodpeckers, Stripe-breasted Tit, Red-collared Babbler, Archer's and White-bellied Robin-Chats, Doherty's Bushshrike, Mountain Masked, Black-faced, Chestnut-throated, and Collared Apalises, Rwenzori Batis, Grauer's and Short-tailed Warblers, White-tailed Blue Flycatcher, Chapin's Flycatcher, Rwenzori Apalis, Purple-breasted and Regal Sunbirds and Strange Weaver. Birding in dense forest can be challenging but a wide range of birds is possible. We should encounter Black-and-white-casqued Hornbill, Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater, Pink-footed Puffback and more skulking species in the form of African Hill Babbler, Dusky Crimsonwing and Grauer's Warbler. Walking along roads and trails can be productive for African Broadbill, Willard's Sooty Boubou, Mountain Oriole, Mountain Illadopsis, Archer's Robin and Red-faced Woodland Warbler. On the canopy walk we search for Black-billed Turaco, Kivu Ground Thrush and Purple-headed Sunbird. Along the waterfall trail we have chances of Grey Apalis, Cabanis's Greenbul, Yellow-bellied Wattle-eye and Yellow-eyed Black Flycatcher. Almost anything may turn up at this undiscovered forest.

Day 11: Today we return to Kigali after a final visit into the forest.

Day 12: Travel to the swamps of Gahanga and Gashora for our final full day in Rwanda. Areas near sugar cane factories can be productive for Blue-headed Coucal, Red-faced Cisticola, Papyrus Canary and White-winged Warbler. Gashora is an important bird area in Rwanda, holding several species of migrants from Europe plus Cape Wagtail, African Snipe, Red-chested Cuckoo and Carruther's Cisticola.

Day 13: Morning flight back to the UK with arrival on the same day.

Prices

Ground Price: £4695
 Tour B: £4995 (provisional)
 Single room: £450
 Deposit: £450
 *Air Fare: £700

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

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

* Please refer to our terms and conditions relating to flights