

Escape

Where to go. What to see. The deals to get you there.

Right at home in Rwanda

KATE WEBSTER

BEING my second time visiting Rwanda, I thought I knew what to expect. I was wrong, as this small east African country has so much to offer. It is not a country you visit once, but a country that draws you back time and time again.

Rwanda is one of those destinations that surprises you in all the good ways.

It is unlike other African countries and maybe even unlike any other country in the world.

A progressive country that is quickly moving forward, it is refreshingly different. You can forget the busy, raw, authentic and traditional Africa.

The roads are impeccably maintained, rubbish is nearly non-existent and the feeling of safety is strong.

What draws many travellers to Rwanda to begin with is the gorillas.

The mountain gorillas are the world's most endangered ape and are found only in small portions of protected Afro-montane forests in northwest Rwanda, southwest Uganda and eastern Democratic Republic of Congo in the Virunga Mountains of central Africa.

The best place to witness

these mountain gorillas is during a visit to Rwanda's Volcanoes National Park. Consisting of 125km of mountain forest and the six Virunga volcanoes, the lush forested slopes of the mountains form an appropriately dramatic natural setting for what is arguably the most poignant and memorable wildlife experience in the world: gorilla trekking.

The wildlife experience in Rwanda does not stop with the gorillas. Many people are surprised you can also have a 'Big Five' safari experience in Rwanda.

Take a five-hour drive east of Volcanoes National Park towards the border with Tanzania and you will find Akagera National Park.

The mountainous scenery surrounding and throughout Akagera National Park is, quite simply, beautiful. The landscape inside the park ranges from low, wide plains dominated by grass and cactus-like Euphorbia candelabra shrubs, which morphs into both thick and thin forests among rugged terrain that is so characteristic of Rwanda.

It is here you will discover lions, elephants, rhino, buffalo and antelope species including elands and topis. There are also Maasai giraffes, monkeys,



SURPRISES APLENTY: Rwanda, also known as Land of a Thousand Hills, boasts beautiful national parks and a range of wildlife.

Pictures: Kate Webster



You can spot elephants at Akagera National Park, along with lions, rhinos, buffalo and antelope.

savannah birds, civets, leopards, hyenas and serval cats.

You can visit the park for a day or, for a full safari experience, stay a few nights at one of the lodges inside the park.

Beyond the wildlife, Rwanda is home to some of the oldest rainforests in Africa. Rounding out the national park trifecta, take the winding scenic road along Lake Kivu

through tea plantations to Nyungwe Forest National Park. The largest tropical Afro-montane rainforest east or central Africa, Nyungwe Forest National Park was established in 2004.

The scenic beauty of this region is one of its biggest drawcards. Bordered by the Rwanda-Burundi border in the south and Lake Kivu and the



The chance to see mountain gorillas draws many travellers to Rwanda.

Democratic Republic of Congo to the west, the park covers about 1020 square kilometres, leaving plenty of room to explore.

Bordering the forest, tea plantations can be seen covering the rolling hills of the country, creating a stunning contrast with the blue skies and red dirt roads.

It is easy to see why they

call Rwanda the Land of a Thousand Hills.

It is only when you go beyond the gorillas, you learn it is also a country of a thousand experiences to be had.

Discover Rwanda for yourself with Where Wild Things Roam Travel.

www.wherewildthingsroamtravel.com/trip/gorillas

Hot tropical deals to indulge in

RELAX in tropical bliss and save up to \$664 per person with this five-night Palm Cove holiday from Flight Centre.

Now from just \$599 per person, the package includes return economy-class airfares to Cairns, five nights' accommodation at Mantra Amphora, buffet breakfast daily and a range of exclusive extras such as late checkout and discounts for spa treatments, food and beverages.

Set on the palm-fringed beach in spectacular Palm Cove, Mantra Amphora is the ideal place to soak up all the warmth and beauty of the region.

Pay from \$599 per person departing Brisbane. Valid for sale until November 6, and



LIVING IT UP: Cairns' Mantra Amphora. Picture: Contributed

travel between November 7, 2019, and June 26, 2020.

BALI BONUSES

Enjoy a luxury holiday in Bali complete with return airfares, loads of free extras and savings of up to \$1959 per person with

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Pay from \$899 per person departing Perth and from \$1099 per person departing Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney. Valid for sale until November 6 and travel between February 1 and June 30, 2020.

Phone Flight Centre on 13 16 00 and quote 7626992 for the Palm Cove deal or quote 7628399 for the Bali deal. Or visit www.flightcentre.com.au. Conditions apply.

Discover NZ's breathtaking beauty

THIS November, treat yourself to the ultimate spring break with Ecrusing's sensational 12-night New Zealand Explorer fly-cruise package.

Starting in Sydney on November 20, this itinerary offers the very best of the Land of the Long White Cloud on-board *Celebrity Solstice*.

Your journey begins in Sydney with a two-day sail down Australia's east coast before arriving in Melbourne. From here *Solstice* charts a course east across the Tasman, bound for New Zealand's South Island. First stop is the majestic Fiordland National Park, where you will spend three glorious days cruising through the jaw-dropping Milford, Doubtful and Dusky sounds.



NATURE'S BEST: Enjoy a stop in Milford Sound with Ecrusing.

At Dunedin catch a glimpse of royal albatrosses and yellow-eyed penguins, explore the estates of Larnach Castle and Olveston House, or enjoy the iconic Speight's Brewery.

A stop in the nation's capi-

tal, Wellington, is the place to discover the country's cultural heart, while Picton is your gateway to the famed Marlborough wineries. An overnight stopover in Tauranga in the Bay of Plenty provides the perfect opportunity to visit Middle-Earth's Hobbiton movie set, or simply relax and sunbathe on the white sand beaches, before disembarking in Auckland on December 2.

The cruise is priced from \$1299 per person twin-share, including all accommodation on-board *Solstice*, Auckland transfers and return flight to Australia.

Conditions apply. Visit www.ecrusing.travel or phone 1300 369 848.