

# Lakes Tour

## Itinerary

**Stage One:** Kigali to Lake Cyohoha, about two hours along mostly paved highway with a little gentle off-roading to reach the Lake Cyohoha Campsite. Spend the night either in a safari tent or a cabin, enjoying the campfire.

**Stage Two:** Lake Cyohoha to Lake Muhazi, about 4.5 hours passing between lakes Bugesera, Rumira, Birara, Sake and Mugesera. Some off roading skill required. You can spend the night at Vox Wagon Campsite, where old vehicles have been turned into beds, or you can rent our Airbnb house on the lakeshore.

**Stage Three:** Once you are fully rested, you pass back through Kigali and continue up to the twin lakes of Burera & Ruhondo, about 4-4.5 hours north, with some off roading skill required. There are several accommodation options available, but we suggest Ruhondo beach resort, situated on a peninsular in Lake Ruhondo. It is worth spending a day exploring the lakeside resorts and canoeing.

**Stage Four:** Once you are fully rested, you can continue west about 2.5 hours to Rwanda's most famous lake, Kibuye. After you leave the Twin Lakes basin, you hit a well-paved highway. We suggest either glamping at Inzu Lodge or opting for Paradis Malahide if you want a little luxury. We suggest you might want to spend a day or two enjoying the beach, the bars and the tiki boat.

**Stage Five:** From Gisenyi, follow the well-paved highway along the lakeshore to Kibuye, which is Gisenyi's quieter cousin. This takes about 2 hours. Spend the night in a comfortable bed at Rwiza Village or Bethany and take a boat ride out to Napoleon Island to visit the fruit bats.

**Stage Six:** When you're ready, make the 3.5 hour return journey to Kigali along a well-paved highway. Stop off at Chutes Ndaba waterfall. When you get back, head to a nice restaurant like India Khazana in Nyarutarama or The Hut behind the Convention Centre for a celebratory meal.

Please be advised that the last Saturday of every month is umuganda (national community service day) and many attractions and services are closed until around 11 am. It's best to avoid travelling during this time. It is also worth checking the Wikipedia page 'Public holidays in Rwanda'.

Please also be advised that all lakes in Rwanda carry a risk of belhazia. Avoid swimming in Cyohoha and Muhazi. If you swim in Lake Kivu or the twin lakes, take praziquantel (biltricide) before you return home. This medication is available at most pharmacies.

## Lake Cyohoha



Lake Cyohoha marks the border between Rwanda and Burundi. There is a campsite right on the lake shore that offers cottages and tents, with a restaurant and fire pit. The road to Cyohoha is a well-paved highway, but you will need to do a little light off-roading to get the last few kilometres to the campsite. Watch out for rain furrows and gravel on the downhill slopes, go light on the brakes.

This is a gentle way to ease into your trip with a short ride giving an introduction to rural Rwanda. The campsite is relaxed and provides an excellent view of Burundi across the lake.

Cottages at Lake Cyohoha Campsite cost 35-40,000 francs, safari tents are 25,000 and boat rides are 10,000 per hour. Contact Joseph, WhatsApp: +250 788 494 132.



## Lake Muhazi



Lake Muhazi is a popular weekend retreat about an hour north-east of Kigali. We operate an Airbnb on the lakeshore which can accommodate up to six people in two bedrooms. There is a BBQ, fire pit and boat available for use. You can book the retreat through us for \$100 for a single night or \$150 for two nights.

If you feel like camping, check out Vox Wagon Campsite five minutes up the road. A unique campsite where old vehicles have been converted into beds. You can get prices and make a booking by WhatsApping JP: +250 788 322 333



There's a bar called The Fish Pub about 4 km along the bay. They sell locally caught fish, beer, and often have music.

Some off-roading skill is required to get from Cyohoha to Muhazi as the route passes between lakes Bugesera, Rumira, Birara, Sake and Mugesera, and it is not always well maintained. You pick up the highway again at Ngoma, then there's a little more off-roading to reach the shores of Muhazi.

## The Twin Lakes



The twin lakes of Burera and Ruhondo are a famous attraction in northern Rwanda. The two lakes rest side by side, with Burera being the second-largest lake entirely inside Rwanda. Burera empties into Ruhondo with a hydroelectric power station harnessing the energy between the two.

There are several accommodation options in the region, though we suggest Ruhondo Beach Resort ([www.ruhondoresort.rw](http://www.ruhondoresort.rw)), which is a comfortable guesthouse and campsite on a peninsular reaching out into Lake Ruhonado. You need to park up at the carpark by the hydroelectric plant and take a boat over to the resort. The carpark is guarded to keep vehicles safe.

The section of road between the twin lakes, does require some off-roading experience and confidence as the roads are not well maintained and contain some steep drops and climbs.

We suggest spending a couple of days in the region to explore the lakeside resorts. There is a company called Kingfisher Journeys ([www.kingfisherjourneys.com](http://www.kingfisherjourneys.com)) which provides canoeing trips around the two lakes. Contact them for more information: +250 788 318 759 / +250 780 639 068



Leaving the lakes for Gisenyi, you pass through Muhazi (also called Ruhengeri) where there is a nice coffee shop called Cramer. Somewhere to relax, caffeinate and take a picture of yourself against the angel wings painted in the back garden – a very traditional activity.



## Gisenyi



Gisenyi is a very popular weekend getaway from Kigali. Situated around 3.5 hours north west of the capital, on the shores of Lake Kivu. Whereas Kibuye is considered a quiet retreat, Gisenyi is more lively, with a stretch of beach-side bars (Tam Tam, Saga Bay and Lakeside), and a long stretch of golden beach behind Serena Hotel.

For accommodation, we recommend staying a little way out of town at Inzu Lodge or Paradise Malahide. Inzu is a comfortable glamping site offering tents with

proper beds or small cabins. There's a campfire in the evening and a lovely restaurant with a good selection of food. Be warned they only deal in cash, no cards, and take your own water bottle to refill from the bar. If you're looking for a little luxury, you can try Paradise Malahide which offers cottages on the lakeshore. These two places are very close to each other and there are several other hotels along the same road. Just be warned that the road up to Inzu Lodge is not well maintained. It's short but very steep and requires a little skill to get back down on two wheels.



Right next to Inzu Lodge is Nirvana Heights. This hotel has a wonderful infinity pool looking out over the lake. It costs around 7,000 to swim for the day and there is a covered restaurant with food and drink.



Another nice activity in Gisenyi is the tiki boat run by Inzu Lodge. The tiki boat is a floating bar that sets sail around 5 pm so you can enjoy the sunset on the lake. It's around 15,000 francs per person, with a minimum of four people. You can find more information at [inzulodge.com/inzu-tiki-boat/](http://inzulodge.com/inzu-tiki-boat/) or by WhatsApping: +250 784 179 203 The boat leaves from Amaliza Lounge, just next door to Inzu and Paradise, which is also a nice lake-side bar where you can grab a cocktail afterwards.

## Kibuye



Kibuye, also called Karongi, is one of the most beautiful areas of Rwanda. A peaceful, relaxing town on the shores of Lake Kivu, surrounded by lush volcanic islands and a famous colony of fruit bats on Napoleon Island.

On your way back to Kigali, we suggest you stop off at Chutes Ndaba about half-an-hour out of town. Key it into your GPS as there isn't a sign, just a pitstop by the side of the road. Walk to the edge of the cliff and look out across an incredible valley with a waterfall plummeting down. The

story is that Ndaba was a honey collector who got too greedy. He saw a beehive halfway down the waterfall and tried to reach it by tying a rope and walking down, but he slipped and fell, washed away by the waterfall which is now named after him. It stands as a moral warning not to reach further than your means. Local children often surround sightseers, singing and playing music on homemade instruments. It's customary to give them a 1,000 franc note to share, but don't feel pressured to giving more.

We recommend staying at Rwiza Village, a set of wooden huts looking out across the lake. You can hire a boat around the islands for 30,000 francs per hour. It takes one hour to get to Amahoro Island (Peace Island) or two hours to visit the bat colony on Napoleon Island. Wear good shoes and take water. Amahoro is a gentle stroll, but Napoleon is a bit of a hike up a steep hill. We also recommend



you take snacks as the restaurant at Rwiza closes early and it's not advisable to risk the road out after dark. Also avoid Fridays as there is a cattle market next to the lodge. People come from DRC to sell livestock and it gets very noisy. If you're looking for a slightly more budget stop, try Hotel Bethany a little way along the bay. They have cheaper rooms up the hill and more expensive ones on the waterfront.

The ride to Rwiza from Gisenyi takes about 2 hours along a well-paved, lakeside road. The final few yards up to Rwiza Village is a bit of an off-road obstacle course and some experience is required. The road to Bethany is also a dirt road but much better kept.

People regularly swim in Lake Kivu, but as with all lakes in Rwanda there is a risk of bilharzia so if you do swim in the lake take praziquantel (biltricide) before you return home. This medication is available at most pharmacies.