

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.

There are two routes to Gisenyi. The first is the traditional route up to Musanze and then west, which takes around 3.5 hours. The second is the newer road which follows along the shore of Lake Kivu, eventually

leading to Kibuye. This takes a bit longer, around 4.5 hours, but provides beautiful views of the Lake and enters Gisenyi through the Pfunda tea fields, which are also very beautiful. If taking the first route, you can stop off for coffee and cake at Crema, a well-known coffee shop in Musanze. In the garden, you'll find a painting of angel's wings on the wall, it's tradition to take a photo of yourself in front of them. If taking the second route, stop by Chutes Ndaba waterfall about 15 minutes after Mbanza. 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. Both routes follow very good, paved roads and it's perfectly possible to take one route in and the other back.



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 camp fire 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.

Many people swim in Lake Kivu, but as with all lakes in Rwanda, there is a risk of bilharzia. If you do swim in the lake, take praziquantel (biltricide) before you return home. This medication is available from most pharmacies.

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/ 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.

