



# Rwanda



## Country Overview:

*Location:* Central Africa, east of Democratic Republic of the Congo

*Size:* 26,338 sq km

*Population:* 12,012,589 (July 2013 est.)

*Capital:* Kigali

*Exports-commodities:* coffee, tea, hides, tin ore

*Imports-commodities:* foodstuffs, machinery and equipment, steel, petroleum products, cement and construction material

*Currency:* Rwandan Francs (RWF)

*Ethnic groups:* Hutu (Bantu) 84%, Tutsi (Hamitic) 15%, Twa (Pygmy) 1%

*Religion:* Roman Catholic 56.5%, Protestant 26%, Adventist 11.1%, Muslim 4.6%, indigenous beliefs 0.1%, none 1.7% (2001)

*Government type:* republic; presidential, multiparty system

*Chief of State:* President Paul KAGAME (since 22 April 2000)

*Head of Government:* Prime Minister Pierre Damien HABUMUREMYI (since 7 October 2011)

*Language:* Kinyarwanda (official, universal Bantu vernacular), French (official), English (official), Kiswahili (Swahili, used in commercial centers)



## Republic of Rwanda / Republika y'u Rwanda

### Meetings and Negotiations

- Use your right hand when shaking hands. Shaking hands is **expected** in business or government meetings.
- Men greeting men – a handshake is appropriate.
- Women greeting women – a handshake and/or nod of acknowledgment is appropriate.
- Greetings between men & women – a handshake is usually appropriate but it is best to wait for the woman to extend her hand, otherwise a bow or a nod of acknowledgment will suffice.
- Punctuality** tends to be more valued in business situations, but deadlines are often not met.
- Time is fluid in this culture; however government officials will almost always be on time because they emphasize **punctuality** as one of their main values.

### Business Attire

- People in Kigali take pride in their appearance and dress up.
- Men wear suits, a tie, and dress shoes.
- Women typically will wear **conservative** dresses and conservative blouses.

### Behavior

- In interpersonal relationships, it is **common** for Rwandans to be 30 minutes to an hour late; flexibility is encouraged. Often, Rwandans expect foreigners to be on time, even if they are not.
- They like to take their time; relationship building is **very** important in Rwandan culture.
- Personal space tends to be very **minimal**. People often talk very close to each other and less than an arm's length is common in most situations.
- When two people of the same

- sex are talking, touching is acceptable. When two people of the opposite sex talk there is very little to no touching.
- Generally, people **prefer** indirect eye contact. Overly direct eye contact can be considered aggressive.
- When gesturing or beckoning for someone to come, Rwandans place the palm downwards and make a scratching motion with the fingers.
- It is **rude** to point at people, as pointing is reserved for dogs, so usually the whole hand/arm is used.

### Gift Giving

- use both hands when giving a gift
- Appropriate Gifts:**
- food items, books
- Gifts to Avoid:**
- expensive gifts

## Business Tips continued

### Conversation

- Rwandans tend to be very **indirect**, talking around issues instead of discussing them directly. Conversations are usually preceded by questions about the family, etc. and other niceties.
- Some terms in Kinyarwanda: A simple "Mwaramutse" in the

- morning (or "Mwiriwe" in the afternoon) will make people smile and open up to you. They **enjoy** meeting foreigners who make an effort to learn their language and culture.
- Humor plays a big role in communicating and most Rwandans enjoy a good joke. However, **avoid** sarcasm because

it may not translate well.

### Topics to Discuss:

- food, the Rwandan landscape, your home country, sports, and the weather

### Topics to Avoid:

- asking about someone's ethnicity, making any referral to the war/genocide, discussing politics, or sex