



# NEWSLETTER

Rwanda Embassy in the UAE

Issue 1 - August 2020

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via:  
[Ambaabudhabi@minaffet.gov.rw](mailto:Ambaabudhabi@minaffet.gov.rw)



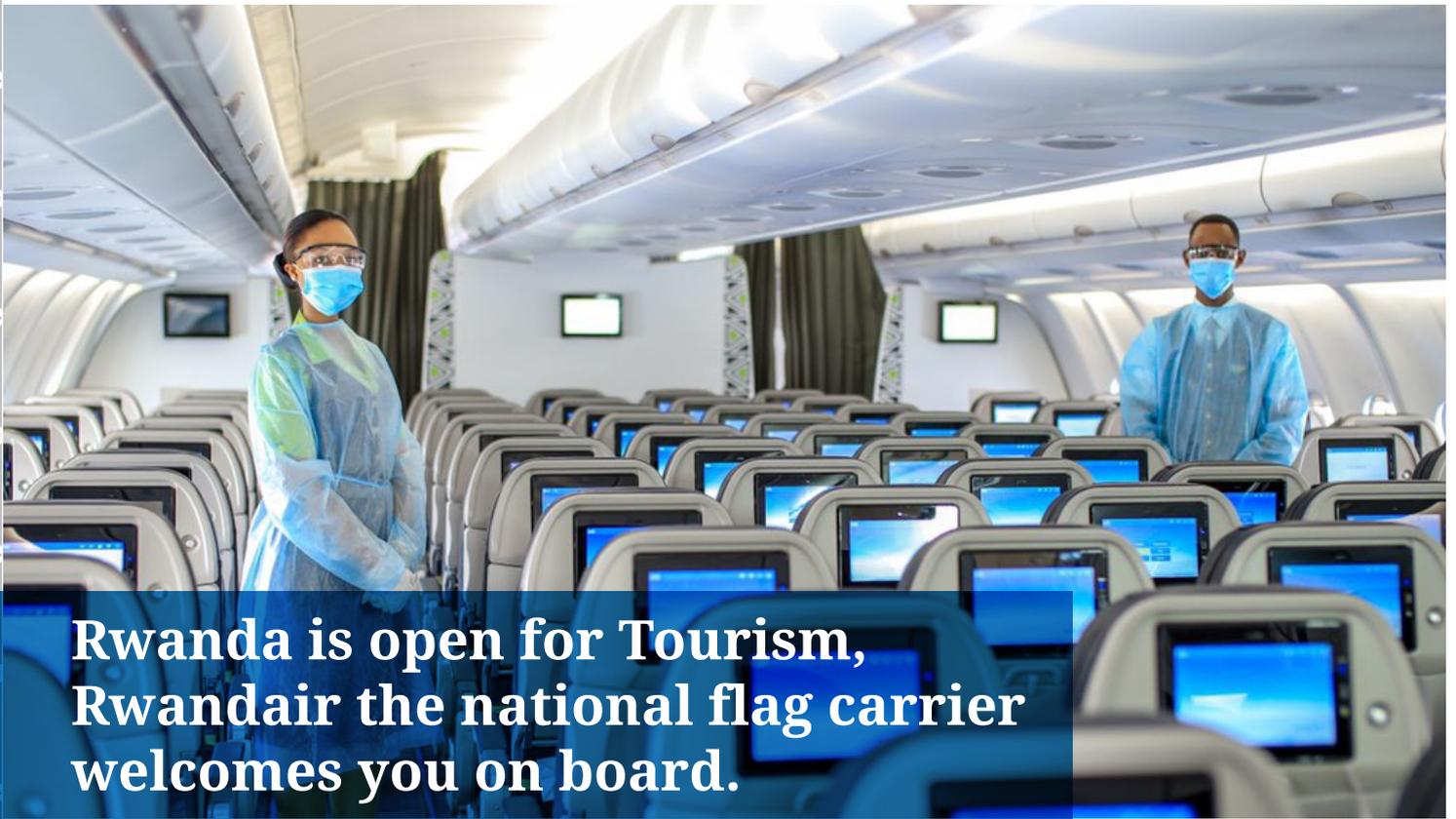
## Message from Ambassador

I am delighted to introduce our first Rwanda in UAE newsletter to all Rwandan Community in the UAE, friends of Rwanda and readers alike. It is now ten months since I arrived here in UAE from mid October 2019 as Rwanda's Ambassador with residence in the beautiful and neat city of Abu Dhabi. Naturally, there is a lot to share. Unfortunately, we are living in incredibly challenging times and the first half of 2020 has taken all the focus to fighting the global COVID-19 pandemic that has not only affected lives but livelihoods in more or equal measure.

As we initiate this platform, I believe it will enable us to share with our readers insightful information on Rwanda as well as on our fruitful cooperation between the two friendly countries closing any information gaps that may exist. Through this newsletter, we aim to share with you our regular activities and achievements to enable some of our readers to learn about Rwanda reflecting on the history as well as on current socio-economic developments including the ongoing Rwanda's response to Covid19. We also aim to share more on the excellent cooperation between the two countries. Indeed, Rwanda and UAE share historical friendship built on trust and mutually beneficial cooperation. People to people relations predate diplomatic ties given the strategic positioning of Dubai as a trade and logistics hub. For us, the UAE has been an important development partner with increasing investment and trade linkages that we aim to further expand. Cooperation in Technology, Education, Health, Private Investment, Culture and Tourism constitute key pillars of our excellent bilateral ties.

In this first edition, we chose to solely focus on Rwanda response to COVID-19 and reopening for tourism. With the health and safety measures in place, the excellent weather all year round, our attractive natural heritage, the big six including the majestic mountain Gorillas, our open visa regime, it's time to take your next flight. Anytime is the best time to #VisitRwanda. Murakoze!

- Ambassador Emmanuel Hategeka



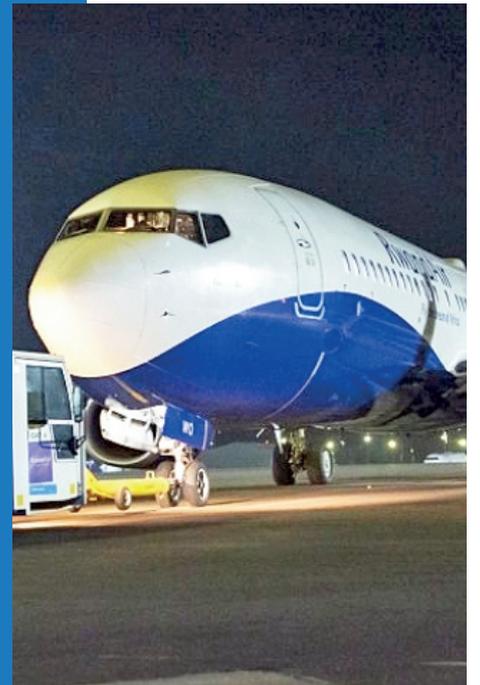
## Rwanda is open for Tourism, Rwandair the national flag carrier welcomes you on board.

RwandAir has finally resumed commercial flights on 1st August 2020 after months of suspension due to the novel coronavirus.

The first flight to Dubai was operated on 1st August and Rwandair is scheduled to land in Dubai 3 days a week namely, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday. Subsequent changes will be announced. Health and hygiene protocols on board are designed to ensure safety for all passengers.

Passengers departing, transiting, or arriving in Rwanda will be required to present a Covid-19 negative certificate taken within 5 days before departure. At the Kigali International Airport, self-check-in kiosks, thermal cameras and screening robots, and hand sanitizer dispensers have been put in place as part of the health measures. As airlines are returning to the skies, Rwanda considers that safety is the number one priority for safe flying of passengers in order to better live with this “new normal” in a safe environment.

RwandAir has been working hard to prepare for the return of its customers, and has published a Five-Step Health & Safety Guide that can be found on <https://www.rwandair.com/information/prepare-to-fly/five-step-health-safety-guide-2/> to ensure a clean and secure welcome back on board.



“Rwanda's progress is due to a similar combination of strong leadership, universal health coverage, well-supported health workers and clear public health communications. ... And when people test positive for the virus, they're isolated and health workers then visit every potential contact and test them also.”

**Dr. Tedros Adhanom**

WHO - Director General of the World Health Organization

# Safety for all Travelers is Priority Number 1

Rwanda is among the first countries globally to be fully compliant with International Civil Aviation Organization's (ICAO) global standards on global biosafety framework for the safe restart of aviation. So far, the latest data from the global body shows that Rwanda is one of few countries globally to have fully complied with the regulations.

All travelers arriving or transiting through Rwanda will be screened upon entry and take a second Covid19 test to confirm the negative results of the test done prior to arrival. Travelers are required to wait 24 hours for the results of their COVID-19 test in a designated transit hotel (designated hotels range from 5 stars to guest houses); and while in the waiting period, they should observe all prevention measures announced by the Ministry of Health.

The Government of Rwanda negotiated special rates at designated transit hotels for the 24-hour waiting period. Tests for the travelers cost 60 USD (includes 50 USD for the test and a medical service fee of 10 USD). The test results are received by SMS or email, and the turnaround time for results is 24hrs from the time a sample is collected. Upon receiving a negative test result, travelers will be allowed to check out of the hotels; and if the results are positive, they (travelers) will be treated until they have fully recovered, at their own cost.



# Exclusive Interview with TTN on Rwanda Reopening

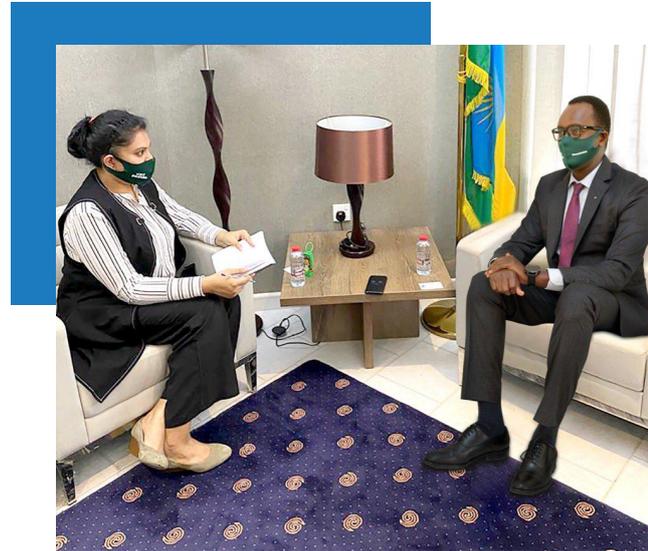
On 19th August 2020, Travel and Tourism Middle East News conducted an exclusive Interview with Ambassador Emmanuel Hategeka to find out why we should sit up and take notice of this East African gem, also commonly referred to as the 'Land of a Thousand Hills'

## When you think about tourism in Rwanda, what are the most enduring images in your mind?

Ever green, clean, and beautiful country home to the rare Mountain Gorillas

Tourism is Rwanda's biggest foreign exchange earner with visitor arrivals at close to 2 million visitors per year generating annual revenues of US\$ 498 million (as of 2019).

Rwanda has diverse offerings for all tourists – from trekking the majestic mountain gorillas in Volcanoes National Park to going on a savannah safari to spot the 'Big 5' in Akagera National Park. Apart from visiting the national parks, tourists can also enjoy a variety of kayaking, cycling, hiking, and bird watching to list but a few of the remarkable attractions and exciting things to do in Rwanda.



- Rwanda has emerged as the second-best destination for mice tourism on the African continent. Investments in hospitality infrastructure, good roads, open visa regime and an efficient national airline have all contributed to attracting large numbers of conference and business travellers.

## What are the visa requirements for UAE and other nationalities travelling to Rwanda?

From 1 Jan 2018, Citizens of all countries that are not visa exempt are allowed to get a 30-day visa upon arrival without prior application. They may also submit applications online at the Directorate General of Immigration and Emigration website ([www.migration.gov.rw](http://www.migration.gov.rw)) or at the Rwanda Diplomatic Missions of the country of residence before departure. Visa fees do not exceed US\$ 50 for a single-entry visa or US\$ 70 for multiple entry visa.

It's important to note that members of the African Union, Francophonie and Commonwealth countries are exempt from applying for Visas when visiting Rwanda and don't pay any visa fees.

## How many travellers from the UAE have been to Rwanda in 2019?

Last year, Rwanda received a total of about 500 visitors from the GCC mainly on holiday, business, and conference missions. The visitor numbers are steadily growing as we create more awareness about Rwanda's tourism offering and interest travel trade to package Rwanda.

## What is the value of investment in Rwanda from the UAE, (in terms of travel and tourism)?

Rwanda values investments from UAE which have been growing over the past few years. Registered investments in sectors of tourism, mining, transport and logistics amount to over USD 110 million.

Main tourism investments are in high end hotels namely: Five-star Gorillas Nest lodge and Nyungwe Forest lodge both operated by global leader in luxury hotels One and Only Resorts.

Other investments have been in logistics with the state-of-the-art Kigali Dry port owned and operated by Dubai World. The country has also benefited from UAE led Investments in mineral processing and trading operations. Important to note that Rwanda is the 2nd easiest place to do business on the African Continent and 38th globally.

## How long before MICE travellers head to Rwanda for conventions?

With the health and COVID-19 prevention measures the Government of Rwanda has put in place, hotels and conference centres are ready to receive MICE travellers (effective 1st August when Kigali Airport re-opened for commercial flights). We look forward to receiving MICE travellers at their earliest convenience.

### **Are there Covid-19 tests that travellers need to undergo before heading to the country? Will there be isolation once tourists land in the country?**

- First of all, Rwanda like many other countries has been affected by the global COVID-19 Pandemic socially and economically. Rwanda was the first country in Africa to implement a total lockdown, followed by testing, contact tracing, isolation, treatment, and mass awareness on hygienic practices as guided by the WHO. As at the end of August Rwanda had close to 2000 active cases and 16th death.

- All travelers arriving in Rwanda must present a negative COVID-19 certificate. The only accepted test is a SARS-CoV 2 Real Time Polymerase Chain Reaction (RT-PCR) performed within 120 hours to departure (meaning travelers must be tested and get results within 5 days of their first flight).

- Once a tourist lands in the country, they are screened upon entry and take a second RT-PCR test to confirm the negative results of the test done prior to arrival. All travellers are required to wait 24 hours for the results of their COVID-19 test in a designated transit hotel. The Government of Rwanda has negotiated special rates at designated transit hotels for the 24-hour waiting period. Should a guest wish to remain in the hotel after receiving negative test results, they are welcome to extend their stay at the hotel's applicable rates.

### **Anything else you'd like to add from the travel and tourism perspective.**

- Our message to the world is that Rwanda is safe and welcomes all visitors. With the COVID-19 preventive measures we have put in place, tourists coming to Rwanda from the GCC should rest assured of enjoying Rwanda's beautiful and diverse attractions and offerings safely and seamlessly.

- To emphasize that point, Rwanda was recently named among the first few countries to receive the world's first-ever global safety and hygiene stamp, launched recently by the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC). The safety stamp means that Rwanda has adopted the global standardized health and hygiene protocols that were devised following the experience of WTTC members dealing with COVID19. They are also based on guidelines from the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Rwanda is proud to adopt these global standards that re-establish traveller confidence.

## **The first Visit Rwanda Webinar in the UAE!**

• On 25th August 2020, the Embassy/Consulate in collaboration with RDB and Gulf Reps organized a webinar to promote Rwanda as the top tourism destination for UAE and GCC tourists. Discussions were attended by Ambassador, Emmanuel Hategeka, Belise Kariza- Chief Tourism Officer at Rwanda Development Board, Philippe Zuber- CEO Kerzner International, Bonita Mutoni – Chairperson, RTTA; CEO- Al Nabooda Travels, Mohammed Al Rais- Deputy MD, Al Rais Travels; Facundo Rau- Managing Director Fursan Travel; Country Manager, Timothy Njihia; MBC1 TV presenter, Haya Yasmin. Around 100 tour and travel agencies as well as Media professionals participated in the event. The former United Nations World Tourism Council (UNWTO) secretary-General, Dr Taleb Al Rafia also graced the webinar with few remarks.

• In his opening remarks, the Ambassador shared key highlights about Rwanda including being the second fastest growing economy in Africa with zero tolerance to corruption, the fifth safest in the world, the cleanest in Africa; the second country in Africa for hosting major MICE events, women empowerment; plastics-free country, open visa policy and welcomed visitors to enjoy the rich culture and natural heritage, notably the BIG 6 including the iconic mountain gorillas.



- Belise Kariza the Chief Tourism Officer at Rwanda Development Board took the webinar participants to “The Remarkable Rwanda” visual ride that showcased all Rwanda tourism sites and expressed RDB readiness to support B2B match making between UAE-GCC and Rwanda travel agencies to discuss offers and package the destination.
- Rwandair country manager, Timothy displayed a video showcasing safety protocols undertaken by Rwandair from boarding to landing in Rwanda reflecting a well-prepared airline in this pandemic ensuring safety for all.
- All panelists praised Rwanda for the exemplary leadership in the management of the covid-19 and considered Rwanda as the truly next top destination for GCC tourists arguing that tourists in the Covid-19 era will need “a safe and confident destination, a less congested tourism environment, easy visa regime, and a short-time flight”.
- Dr. Taleb Rifai, former United Nations World Tourism Council (UNWTO) secretary-General in his brief remarks shared his memory on his last visit to Rwanda: “I have been to Rwanda twice. I was there for the ‘Naming of Gorilla Infants’ (locally termed as KwitIzina, among the conservation activities spearheaded by the government in which the babies of the Mountain Gorillas are given names). I am very happy with what Rwanda leaders are doing. They have the political will which is very good for tourism because tourism will never flourish without the strong political will of leaders.”
- Al Naboodah Travel CEO, Nasir Khan said “People are looking for a change” places which are open and fresh full of nature, a good airline and short flights, economical packages and hustle free visa, halal food and Investment Opportunity. Looking at the health care “Rwanda operates the universal healthcare system and is considered to have the highest quality health system in Africa. That’s the confidence a customer needs to fly to a new destination. Forbes Magazine have included Rwanda among the best places to visit in 2020. I have already been convinced and I am very confident that this is a top next destination.

## UAE extends amnesty for those in the country with expired visas

The UAE public health authorities are taking action to protect the safety and well-being of citizens, residents, and visitors. The UAE has extended an amnesty period waiving the fines of residents whose visas expired before and after March 1, 2020. Those who are in the country on lapsed visas have until November 17 to leave without having to pay a penalty. The Federal Authority for Identity and Citizenship (ICA) has announced the extension of the grace period granted to resident’s visa violators for another three months, along with fine exemptions. It targets people who were already in the country before March 1, 2020 without a valid visa - such as workers with expired permits, jobseekers on expired visit visas and people working without any documents. "Meanwhile, those wishing to leave the country through Dubai Airport must visit the



deportation center at the Civil Aviation Security Centre near Terminal 2, 48 hours before the flight."

<https://beta.smartservices.ica.gov.ae/echannels/web/client/default.html#/login>

<https://www.thenational.ae/uae/government/coronavirus-uae-extends-amnesty-for-those-in-the-country-with-expired-visas-1.1064593>

