

Rwanda

Country name	Rwanda
State title	Republic of Rwanda
Name of citizen	Rwandan
Official languages	Kinyarwanda (<i>kin</i>); French (<i>fra</i>); English (<i>eng</i>); Swahili (<i>swa</i>) ¹
Country name in official languages	Rwanda
State title in official languages	Republika y'u Rwanda (<i>kin</i>); République du Rwanda (<i>fra</i>); Republic of Rwanda (<i>eng</i>); Jamhuri ya Rwanda (<i>swa</i>)
Script	Roman script
Romanization System	Not required
ISO-3166 code (alpha-2/alpha-3)	RW/RWA
Capital	Kigali
Area / Population	26,338km ² / 13,400,541 (2023 est.) ²

Introduction

Rwanda gained independence from Belgium in 1962. Landlocked, Rwanda shares land boundaries with Burundi; Democratic Republic of Congo; Tanzania and Uganda. Though mountainous with many lakes, Rwanda is very densely populated (over 500/km²).

Geographical names policy

For HMG use, geographical names should be taken from official sources if they can be acquired. The Rwanda Natural Resources Authority (RNRA) has a national-level responsibility to provide geospatial information and mapping, and this body has worked with Ordnance Survey on strategies for maintaining geospatial information, though sources do not yet seem to be available. In the absence of national mapping, other Rwandan government sources may be used³, and these could be supplemented with UN products⁴. Although few recent official sources have been seen, it is likely that any such mapping would be presented in French or English, for instance, official websites look to be predominantly in English⁵. If official sources include Kinyarwanda names, these can be

¹ ISO 639 codes are given for languages mentioned in this Factfile.

² <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/rwanda/>

³ For instance, the 2022 census of Rwanda contains profiles of each district:

<https://www.statistics.gov.rw/datasource/fifth-population-and-housing-census-2022>

⁴ The [United Nations system in Rwanda](#) is made up of 22 resident and non-resident agencies, funds, and programmes and therefore has good access to up-to-date information about the country.

⁵ The Constitution states that official documents may be either in one, two or all of the official languages.

included instead of/as well as any other names. All diacritical marks, apostrophes and hyphens should be retained.

The [Africa Geoportal](#) may be used as a helpful source of geospatial data and names⁶; the US Board on Geographic Names (BGN) [Geographic Names Server](#) can also be used as a source for names.

Languages

Rwanda has four official languages: Kinyarwanda, French, English and Swahili. Kinyarwanda is the national language and spoken almost universally, French is widely spoken as the former colonial language. English became an additional official language in 2008⁷ and Swahili in 2017⁸.

Kinyarwanda is a Bantu language and is mutually intelligible with Kirundi, the national language of Burundi.

Inventory of Characters (and their Unicode encodings)⁹

French contains the following letter-diacritic combinations in addition to the unmodified letters of the basic Roman script:

Upper-case character	Unicode encoding	Lower-case character	Unicode encoding
À	00C0	à	00E0
Â	00C2	â	00E2
Ç	00C7	ç	00E7
È	00C8	è	00E8
É	00C9	é	00E9
Ê	00CA	ê	00EA
Ë	00CB	ë	00EB
Î	00CE	î	00EE
Ï	00CF	ï	00EF
Ô	00D4	ô	00F4
Œ	0152	œ	0153
Ù	00D9	ù	00F9
Û	00DB	û	00FB
Ü	00DC	ü	00FC
ÿ ¹⁰ (U+0178)	0178	¹⁰	00FF

⁶ This is a source collated from multiple sources, including Esri, organisations working in Africa and crowdsourced information. It should be used as a supplementary reference.

⁷ Influenced by the political leadership's preference for English, having spent periods in exile in English-speaking countries.

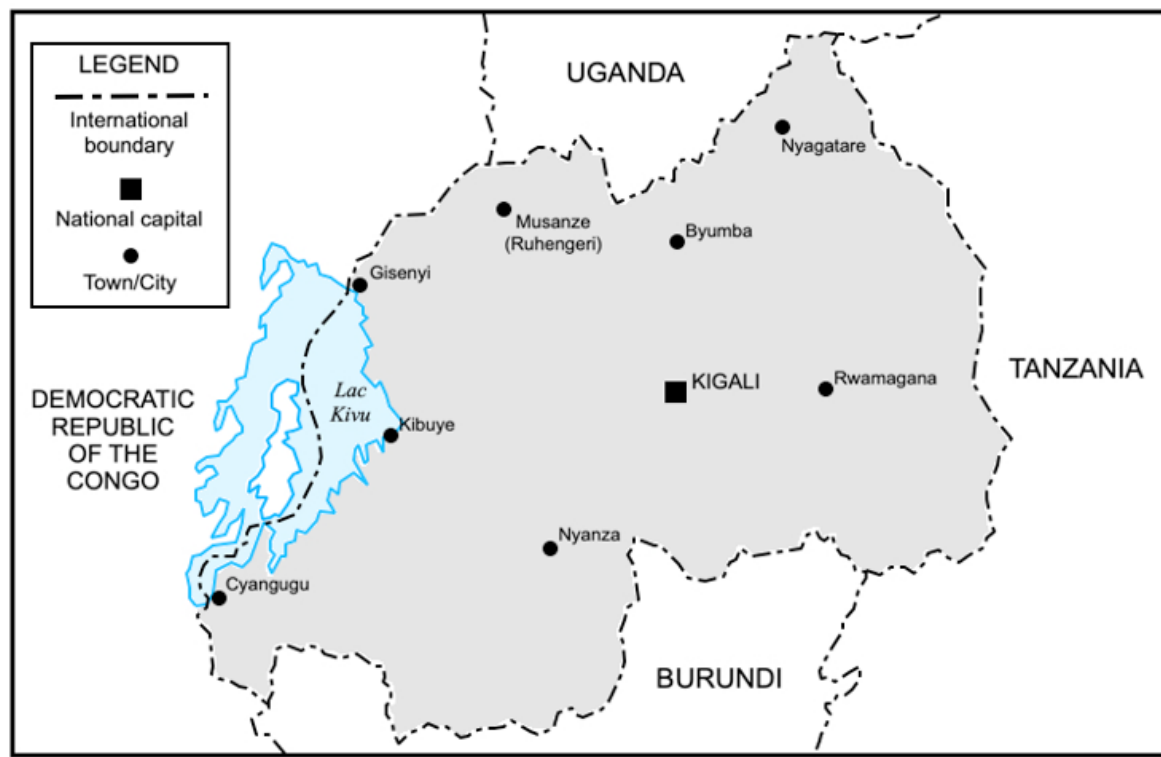
⁸ Motivated by Rwanda's increased linkage with the East African Community, e.g. Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya

⁹ See www.unicode.org.

¹⁰ Rarely encountered

Kinyarwanda is a tonal language, but the tones are not usually indicated in written form, and the language uses no other letter-diacritic combinations in addition to the unmodified letters of the basic Roman script.

Map of Rwanda



Map produced by PCGN for illustrative purposes only, and is not to be taken necessarily as representing the views of the UK government on boundaries or political status.

Administrative structure

Rwanda comprises 4 provinces (*fra, eng*); intara (*kin*) and 1 city (*eng*); ville (*fra*); umujyi (*kin*) at the first-order administrative level (ADM1). These are sub-divided into 30 districts¹¹ at the second-order level.

ADM1 name (French)	ADM1 name (English)	ADM1 name (Kinyarwanda)	ISO 3166-2 code	Administrative centre	Location of centre
Province de l'Est	Eastern Province	Intara y' Iburasirazuba	RW-02	Rwamagana	1°56'55"S 30°26'05"E
Ville de Kigali	Kigali City	Umujyi wa Kigali	RW-01	Kigali	1°56'38"S 30°03'34"E
Province du Nord	Northern Province	Intara y' Amajyaruguru	RW-03	Byumba	1°34'35"S 30°04'03"E
Province de l'Ouest	Western Province	Intara y' Iburengerazuba	RW-04	Kibuye	2°03'35"S 29°20'54"E
Province du Sud	Southern Province	Intara y' Amajyepfo	RW-05	Nyanza	2°20'44"S 29°44'54"E

¹¹ Full details of the districts, and the sectors (ADM3s) within them, are given in [Annex II of organic law n° 29/2005 of 31/12/2005](#).

Other Significant Locations

PCGN Recommended Name¹²	Variant Names/Spellings	Location	Feature Type
Kagera	Akagera	0°57'00"S 31°47'00"E	River (Rwanda; Burundi; Tanzania; Uganda)
Lac Kivu	Lake Kivu	2°01'07"S 29°08'04"E	Lake (Rwanda; Democratic Republic of Congo)
Lac Rweru	Lake Rweru	2°22'40"S 30°19'25"E	Lake (Rwanda; Burundi)
Musanze (Ruhengeri) ¹³	-	1°29'59"S 29°38'06"E	Populated place
Nyabarongo	Nyawarungu	2°20'45"S 30°22'23"E	River
Ruzizi		3°16'06"S 29°14'27"E	River (Burundi; Democratic Republic of Congo; Rwanda)
Volcan Visoke	Mount Visoke; Mount Bisoke	1°27'43"S 29°29'09"E	Mountain (active volcano: Rwanda; Democratic Republic of Congo)
Volcan Karisimbi	Mount Karisimbi	1°30'20"S 29°26'59"E	Mountain (Rwanda's high point at 4519m: Rwanda; Democratic Republic of Congo)

¹² PCGN usually recommends conventional English names for international features, unless national variants are specifically required, or the relevant countries share an official language.

¹³ Though Ruhengeri is the city name, sources (including the 2022 census) often use the name of the district, Musanze, as the name of the urban area.

Useful references

- Africa Geoportal: <https://www.africageoportal.com/>
- BBC Country Profile: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14093238>
- CIA World Factbook: <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/rwanda/>
- Ethnologue: www.ethnologue.com (for information on languages)
- FCDO Geographical Names Index (GNI):
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/geographical-names-and-information>
- FCDO Travel Advice: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/rwanda>
- ISO Online Browsing Platform (OBP) : <https://www.iso.org/obp/ui#home>
- Omniglot: www.omniglot.com (for information on languages and scripts)
- PCGN Country Names list: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/country-names>
- Rwanda census, 2022: <https://www.statistics.gov.rw/datasource/fifth-population-and-housing-census-2022>
- Unicode: www.unicode.org
- [United Nations system in Rwanda](#)
- US Board on Geographic Names GEOnet Names Server: [GNS Search & Download WebApp \(nga.mil\)](#)

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