

# A Weekend Guide to Kigali

THE SCRIBS AND NIBS || 2026 EDITION

A simple guide to help you plan the perfect weekend depending on your mood

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# History and Culture

**Kigali's history is a story of incredible resilience and a vibrant, forward-looking culture.**

## **Kigali Genocide Memorial**

A deeply moving and essential visit. This memorial offers a comprehensive, powerful look into Rwanda's journey toward "Never Again." Give yourself at least two hours here. *Free, donation suggested*

## **Kandt House Museum**

This was the original home of Richard Kandt, who founded Kigali as the colonial capital in 1907. It is the only historical building remaining from 1908 and now houses exhibits on Rwanda's natural resources and a live reptile display. *2000 RWF*

## **Rwanda Art Museum**

Located in the former Presidential Palace, this museum now displays a wide range of contemporary artworks. You can still see the flight debris in the garden from the presidential jet that went down on April 6, 1994. *2000 RWF*

## **Belgian Peacekeepers Memorial**

Located at the site where ten Belgian soldiers were killed in 1994, this quiet, somber spot at Camp Kigali is a significant piece of the city's historical puzzle. *Free*

## **Kimironko Market**

Kigali's largest and most chaotic (in the best way) market. Head here for the sensory overload of fresh produce, but stay for the back rows where you can find kitenge fabric and local crafts.

## **Nyamirambo District**

Head to the Car-Free Zone to find a stretch of amazing restaurants and local life. While you're there, check out the two iconic mosques, Nyamirambo Women's Center for souvenirs, stop by Concept Art Studio, and grab a caffeine fix at Kigali Coffee Lab.

## **Zaria Court**

Zaria Court is a modern mixed-use sports complex with a basketball court, football pitch, outdoor exercise equipment, and a playground. It's complemented by an airy, modern courtyard space with a nice mix of bars, cafes, shops, and restaurants.

# Art Galleries

**Explore the creative soul of the city. Kigali's art scene is intimate and vibrant!**

## **Niyo Arts Center**

The entire driveway is covered in gorgeous colors and features several rooms of art to wander through.

## **Inkingi Arts Space**

This gallery features cool graffiti art on the walls and hosts storytelling and traditional food experiences every third Saturday.

## **MADS Kigali**

Welcoming staff share stories about each artist, and you can often see creators at work in the onsite studio room.

## **NP Arts Center**

An incredibly colorful space where you can often catch community activities in action during the weekend.

## **Inema Arts Center**

One of the city's oldest galleries, it offers a contemporary experience that includes a cup of coffee with your entrance fee.

## **Concepts Art Studio**

The go-to spot for unique printed shirts and art prints of popular locations loved by Kigali locals.

## **Museum Ingabo**

This museum hosts work by artist King Ngabo, who focuses on showcasing Rwanda's history through his art.

## **Studio Mugire**

Located within Indabo Cafe in Kiyovu, this gallery features emotive paintings of the Rwandan countryside.

## **Jean d'Amour Arts**

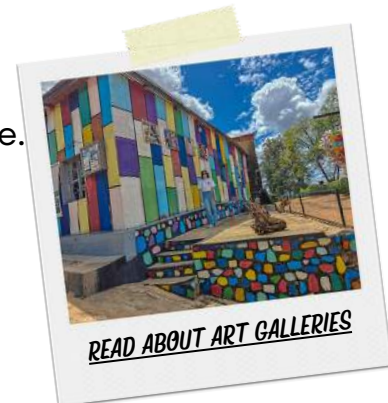
A space where you can explore the creative works and unique artistic vision of Jean d'Amour.

## **Kalpo Arts Center**

A unique space and guesthouse that showcases emerging artists with a cafe.

## **Azizi Life Studio**

Make your own art at Azizi. They host paint and sip, ceramic, and weaving classes.



# Fitness Vibes

**From early morning hikes to high-energy dance classes, Kigali has a fitness scene that is all about community.**

## **Hike with tourismlovers250**

Weekly hikes in a group, perfect for meeting new people and exploring trails in and around the city.

## **Kigali Golf Resort & Villas**

Head to Nyarutarama to play on this stunning 18-hole course designed by Gary Player. Even if you aren't a golfer, the facility includes a high-end health club and tennis courts with incredible views.

## **Fazenda Sengha**

Located at the top of Mount Kigali, this outdoor center is perfect for an active afternoon. You can go horseback riding, try out the ziplines, or hit the archery range—all while looking out over the city.

## **Nyarutarama Sports Centre**

The local go-to for a classic sporty day. It features well-maintained tennis courts and a large swimming pool. It's a great spot to get a workout in and then relax by the water with a post-game meal.

## **Waka Fitness, Kigali Fitness Point, or SOHO Gym**

Choose from one of the top gyms in the city. They offer a variety of classes.

## **Golf Resort Running Track**

Around the Golf Resort is a running track that is popular with everyone in town. Runners and walkers can be seen day and night, as it's well-lit in the evenings.

## **Car-Free Day**

Typically, every other Sunday in Kigali is Car-Free Day. The route extends from the convention center to Kisimenti (by the stadium/Zaria Court). Those with a local SIM card will get a text a day or two in advance if a car-free day is happening.



***ACTIVITIES IN KIGALI***

# Nature Escapes

**The city itself is so green but if you want something a little more lush, try out these nature escapes.**

## **Nyandungu Eco-Park**

A beautiful green lung in the city, perfect for biking or a morning run along well-maintained trails. Note that there is a small entrance fee to access the park.

## **Umusambi Village**

A peaceful sanctuary for endangered Grey Crowned Cranes. This restored wetland is the best spot to see rehabilitated cranes and a variety of other bird species in their natural habitat.

## **Mount Kigali**

Hike through the rural part of the city to reach the "false top"—the true summit is blocked by a military base, but the highest accessible point offers views of the Nyabarongo River. For a proper trek, start from the main road at Pele Stadium and head toward Mera Neza Bar & Restaurant. The highest point was somewhere around here.

## **Park by Museum Ingabo**

There is a park surrounding Museum Ingabo with great views over the city. With tables and covered spaces, it seems perfect for a picnic.



# Rainy Weekend Ideas

**Here is how to stay dry and exploring during the rainy season!**

## **Kigali Universe**

The ultimate indoor hangout. Play mini-football, pool, go bowling, and then have a drink and meal at their restaurant. All covered!

## **Kigali Wellness Hub**

Take a fitness class to keep moving while it pours. They offer a huge variety of indoor sessions, including Pilates, Reformer Pilates, Aerial Yoga, standard Yoga, and even dance classes.

## **Kigali Genocide Memorial**

While the gardens are peaceful, the majority of the memorial is indoors. It is a quiet, sheltered space for reflection and learning.

## **Zenora Wellness Center**

The perfect spot for a rainy afternoon. It offers premium massages, facials, and detox treatments in a calm, high-end environment.

## **Azizi Life Studio**

Spend a rainy morning being creative. Their workshops are all indoors.

## **Inzora Rooftop Cafe**

Tucked inside the Ikirezi Bookshop, this is the perfect place to browse a curated selection of books and art supplies before settling in with a hot drink and their famous carrot-lox bagel.



# Quick Weekend Trips

**Get away from the city on these easy weekend trips, all under two hours from Kigali. These options are great for just one night away.**

## **Umva Muhazi**

Located just over an hour away on the shores of Lake Muhazi, this is the ultimate spot for a stylish, eco-friendly retreat. Expect communal dining, stunning architecture, and activities like kayaking or sunset boat rides.

## **Eagle View Farm & Lake Retreat**

A hidden gem in Bugesera (less than an hour from Kigali) that offers a rustic yet comfortable farm-stay experience. It's the perfect place to disconnect, enjoy farm-to-table meals, and take in the incredible views over Lake Kibirizi.

## **Nena House**

Head south for a weekend of royal history and culture. Stop at the Royal Palace to see the traditional domed palace and the famous long-horned Inyambo cattle. The next day, visit the ethnographic museum.



# Long Weekend Trips

**Spend two nights or more to make the most of these destinations that are 2.5+ hours outside of town.**

## **Akagera National Park**

The ultimate safari experience just 2.5 hours from Kigali. It is home to the Big Five and offers stunning savannah landscapes and boat trips on Lake Ihema. Pro tip: Stay at Akagera Game Lodge or Ruzizi Tented Lodge for an overnight stay inside the park. [Ruzizi Tented Lodge](#), [Akagera Rhino Lodge](#), or [The Rutete Eco Lodge](#) are located outside the park. [Read about how to spend 2 nights.](#)

## **Musanze (Volcanoes National Park)**

The gateway to the mountain gorillas and [golden monkeys](#). Even if you aren't trekking primates ([there are other things to do](#)), head here for the Twin Lakes ([hike](#) or [bike](#)), or a hike through the Volcanoes (the easiest is [Bisoke](#)). It's some of the most beautiful scenery in the country. Stay at [Kinigi Cottage](#), [Little Birds Paradise](#), or the lovely [Randa's Homestay](#).

## **Lake Kivu (Gisenyi or Kibuye)**

Drive 3 hours to the shores of Lake Kivu for a total change of pace. Gisenyi offers a lively beach vibe, while Kibuye is more tranquil, known for its steep hills and [boat tours](#) (including to see the swimming cows). The [night fishing tour](#) is also very unique.

## **The Congo Nile Trail**

If you have a full long weekend and want to stay active, hike or bike sections of this trail along Lake Kivu. It connects small villages, [coffee washing stations](#), and incredible viewpoints, giving you a deep dive into rural Rwandan life.

## **Nyungwe National Park**

A 5-hour drive south brings you to one of the oldest rainforests in Africa. This is the place for chimpanzee trekking and the famous Canopy Walkway. It's a lush, misty escape.



# Top Restaurants

**These are the narrowed-down options of the top restaurants in the city for global and local flavors.**

Damasquino has excellent Lebanese food. I love the beet hummus, kibbeh, and all the eggplant dishes.

Gebeta is a great, chill spot for a veg platter. The firfir was also delish.

Fire and Stone Pizza Company is a pickup pizza spot. Sit out on some of the chairs or take the pizza home. Afterward, get ice cream at Kuna (it's amazing!).

Lavana has a fantastic Mexican menu with a range of tacos, enchiladas, tamales, and more.

Repub Lounge serves up a variety of local food. Here, you can get isombe, which is a delicious pounded greens and peanut dish with spices.

Borneo Indonesian Restaurant has authentic Indonesian food. Be sure to come with a huge appetite.

Eyamy has great dumplings (veg option on request), and delish scallion oil noodles. To top it off, try a flower pastry!

There are two locations of Khana Khazana (Kiyovu and Nyarutarama) provide the same excellent standard of reliable and quality Indian dishes.

## **ALL RESTAURANTS**



# Cafes

**Cafes in Kigali are endless and it's easy to find a good spot for coffee, matcha, fresh juice, and lunch! Here are a few to get you started.**

## **Kivu Noir (Kimihurura & Norrsken)**

Sleek, modern, and serves the best coffee in the city. It's popular for a reason. It's also a great mid-day workspace or spot to catch up with friends. Try the specialty raspberry matcha.



## **Rubia Coffee Roasters**

A staple for specialty coffee with a leafy courtyard vibe that's perfect for hiding away.

## **Indabo Cafe (Kiyovu & Kimihurura)**

With locations in both neighborhoods, these spots are mostly outdoors and feel like sitting in a private garden.

## **Question Coffee (Gishushu & Kiyovu)**

More than just a café, this is a social enterprise supporting women farmers. If you have time, book their "Seed to Cup" masterclass to blend your own beans.

## **Kigali Coffee Lab**

An immersive "Bean to Brew" experience where you can learn traditional roasting and grinding techniques. It's hands-on, educational, and very local.

## **Katina's Kafe**

A heartwarming spot that trains and employs staff from the deaf community. It's great for remote work, has great food, and a lovely mango matcha.

## **Tugende Cafe**

On the grounds of the Mamba sports facility, this is a great cafe to start the day after a round of padel, pickleball, or one of the classes at Kigali Wellness Hub.

**CAFE & REMOTE WORK**

# Drinks with a View

**The land of a thousand hills makes for perfect rooftop bars no matter where you are in town.**

## **La Creola**

With great sunset views, dinner and drinks at La Creola is a great vibe. I've tried pumpkin sauce with dodo (a spinach-like green) tortellini and the jackfruit curry.

## **Luma & Lua**

The restaurant sits on the rooftop of the Luma & Lua hotel and carries a Mediterranean-inspired feel. Instead of the elevator, walk up to the 3rd floor so you can see the murals painted by a local artist.

## **Zaria Court Hotel**

Zaria Court Hotel's rooftop bar has a sleek vibe, perfect for dressing up a bit and looking out over the basketball court.

## **Boho Lounge**

A trendy spot in Kimihurhuah, Boho has a great wine selection and cocktails to match. Sit on the high tops for the best view of the city.

## **Lemon**

Looking out over Kigali, Lemon has an expansive view of the city. Here, you can go from work to play. With plenty of tables and plugs, it's a popular spot for working remotely, but the dinner and drink options are really good too.

## **Ubumwe Grande Hotel Sky Lounge**

The classic choice for a 360-degree view of Kigali.

## **Eagle View Lodge**

Nestled high on Rebero Hill, this spot offers a breathtaking, panoramic view of the entire city and is the perfect quiet escape for a sunset cocktail.

## **The Rock Bistro**

Perched atop a hill, The Rock Bistro has a view of the surrounding landscape and is famous for its meat dishes served on a hot rock.



# Shopping in Kigali

**These shops will keep you occupied all weekend.**

## **Rwanda Clothing**

A one-stop shop for everything from African-print fashion and accessories to homeware and furniture.

## **Deomade Couture**

Excellent quality African-style fabrics and clothing at reasonable prices—perfect for gifts.

## **Nyamirambo Women's Center (NWC)**

If you only visit one shop, make it this one. It's a community-led project featuring bags, baskets, and clothes that support local women.

## **Azizi Life Studio**

Check out their beeswax products, clay piggy banks, and woven goods.

## **Irebe Basket Collections**

Everything here feels "export quality." Come for unique baskets of all shapes and sizes or a piece of Gatagara Pottery.

## **The Car-Free Zone (KN 84 St)**

First, there are a bunch of shops along the car-free area with the "Kigali" sign. The shopping is between here and here. Second, there is a group of shops on either side of the street of KN 84.

## **Cavico Craft Village**

A five-minute walk from Indabo Cafe, this spot is packed with classic crafts and paintings. It's great for gift-shopping in bulk (MoMo is preferred!).

## **Abraham Konga**

Beautiful jewelry made from recycled brass as well as souvenirs. Visit both locations.

## **Kicirwanda**

Located next to Deomade, this is the spot for woven lamps and custom-made furniture. Their work is high-quality, well-priced, and very reliable for custom orders.

## **Kiza**

For unique sports shirts that have Rwandan themes, visit Kiza.



***KIGALI SHOPPING GUIDE***



# Tea and Coffee Plantations

Head to these tea and coffee plantations for the day.

## Kigali Day Trips

### **Kinini Coffee Washing Station**

Located about an hour north of the city in Rulindo, this is an incredible spot to see the coffee process from seed to cup. It's a sustainable, woman-led cooperative that produces some of the region's best beans. Pro-tip: Reach out to Price (+250 787 834 245) to organize your visit.

### **Sorwathe Tea Factory**

Experience Rwanda's famous tea culture at the country's oldest private tea factory, just about 1.5 hours from Kigali. If you want to fully soak in the mountain air, they have a guesthouse where you can spend the night.

## Further Away

### **Lake Kivu Coffee Plantation**

Kinunu Guest House is home to the Lake Kivu coffee plantation washing station.

### **Gisovu Tea Estate**

Located between Kibuye and Nyungwe Forest, a good option if you're driving between the two towns. Heads up that I heard you may need a 4x4.

### **Gisakura Tea Factory**

Located around Nyungwe Forest, this is a good option to do the night before you go to trek the chimpanzees.

### **Coffee Tour by Cooprocaki Coffee Cooperative**

Accessible via the Congo Nile Trail (or boat).





# Hotels in Kigali

**Here for the weekend? Check out my personal recommendations on where to stay based on location+ access + vibess.**

## **KISIMENTI (VIBING STADIUM AREA)**

**Luma & Lua** is a beautiful boutique hotel just a few blocks from Zaria Court. It also has an excellent restaurant on site and a vibrant Mediterranean feel. [Read my review.](#)

**Zaria Court Hotel**, located within the Zaria Court complex, offers a unique experience in a modern setting.

## **KIMIHURURA (FOR CAFES AND WALKING AROUND)**

**Bisabo** is a good option for long-term stays. It's got modern furniture and a full kitchen.

**Akira** has great views, a gorgeous pool, and a modern feel.

## **KACIYRU (MY FAV COFFEE SHOP AREA)**

**Yo Ki Ga Li** is a B&B, yoga studio, and cafe all wrapped into one. It is my favorite cafe in town, and the rooms are incredibly cute.

## **KIYOVU (DOWNTOWN FOR WORK)**

**The Marriott** has a great breakfast and business-friendly rooms with plenty of workspace.

**Heaven** is one of the most classic boutique hotels in Kigali. It has a relaxed vibe, activities on site, and a strong reputation among visitors.

## **REBERO (CALM VIBES AND VIEWS)**

**Eagle View Lodge** is beautiful. If you're looking for a fancy weekend getaway, then book the penthouse suite, which has a hot tub.

## **NYARUTARAMA (NEAR THE RUNNING TRACK)**

**Maison Ubururu**, meaning the "Blue House," Maison Ubururu has cute, blue-themed rooms and a nice restaurant on site.

## **KIGALI CONVENTION CENTER AREA (FOR CONFERENCES)**

**The Radisson Blu** is your best option for rolling out of bed and directly into your workshop.



# Want more?


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