AFRIQUE UNIE · TRAVEL NOTEBOOK

Burundi in 9 days: a day-by-day itinerary

Burundi can be discovered in just over a week: the beaches of Lake Tanganyika in Bujumbura, the green hills of the centre, the sacred drums of Gishora near Gitega, then the south, with the Karera waterfalls, the southernmost source of the Nile and the lakeshore at Rumonge. As travel is advised against, entirely or except when essential, along the border with the DRC, in the north-west and in much of the Kibira forest, this route stays in the centre and south, at heightened vigilance. Check your government's official travel advice before you leave.

Day by day

Days 1-2 · Bujumbura, on the shores of Lake Tanganyika (night : Bujumbura)
Once in Bujumbura, settle in and enjoy the view over Lake Tanganyika, one of the deepest lakes in the world, with the mountains of the DRC as a backdrop. The next day, spend the morning on one of the lake's beaches, such as Saga, without swimming: the authorities advise against it because of crocodiles and hippos. Then visit the city centre and its market. A short trip south leads to Mugere, where a stone marks the stay of Livingstone and Stanley in November 1871, a few days after their famous meeting at Ujiji, in Tanzania. The French authorities recommend getting around by car, even in the city centre, and avoiding some outlying districts after dark. Do not visit the Rusizi reserve or take the Gatumba road, where all travel is advised against.

Day 3 · Through the hills to Gitega (night : Gitega)
Leave the lake and climb inland on the national road via Bugarama and Muramvya: about a hundred kilometres and two and a half to three hours on the road, with bends and lorries. The landscape changes quickly: hills covered with banana groves, fields and tea plantations, hilltop villages and lively roadside markets. Gitega, now the country's political capital, is a quiet and pleasant town at around 1,500 metres, where the air is cooler. In the late afternoon, visit the National Museum, which covers the history of the Burundian monarchy and displays traditional objects, then take a walk around the centre.

Day 4 · The sacred drums of Gishora (night : Gitega)
A few kilometres north of Gitega, the Gishora sanctuary is one of the great sites of Burundi's royal tradition. Drums were once kept here for the king, and drummers keep alive the ritual dance of the royal drum, listed by UNESCO as intangible cultural heritage. Watching a performance, with the drums carried on the head and then beaten in a circle, is a highlight of the trip; check the times the day before. For the rest of the day, explore the area around Gitega with a guide, or take a walk in the hills to see rural life.

Day 5 · The Karera waterfalls and the Nyakazu fault (night : Rutana)
Take the road south-east to Rutana, about two hours from Gitega depending on road conditions. Not far from the town, the Karera waterfalls tumble down in a series of cascades through a gallery forest: a path leads down to the pools. Nearby, the Nyakazu fault, often called the Germans' Gorge, offers a spectacular view over the valley and, on clear days, towards Tanzania. Both sites are on the tentative list for World Heritage status. Accommodation in Rutana is simple: book ahead and choose a guarded establishment, as the authorities recommend.

Day 6 · The source of the Nile and Bururi (night : Bururi)
Head west to Rutovu and Mount Kikizi, where a small pyramid marks what is considered the southernmost source of the Nile, that of the Kasumo river. The site, amid the hills, is modest, but the idea of standing at the start of a river that reaches the Mediterranean thousands of kilometres later is moving. Allow several hours of winding road from Rutana. Then continue to Bururi, a small highland town surrounded by a forest reserve where you can walk with a guide and see monkeys and birds. Arrive before dark: avoid driving in the provinces after sunset.

Days 7-8 · Rumonge and the southern shore of Lake Tanganyika (night : Rumonge)
A downhill road links Bururi to Rumonge, on the shores of Lake Tanganyika, in about an hour, with fine views over the water. Rumonge is a small town of fishermen and oil palms. Walk on the beach in the morning to watch the pirogues come in, then spend the afternoon relaxing. The next day, explore the southern shore, for example the Kigwena forest reserve, one of the last lowland forests in the country and home to baboons, or the quieter beaches towards Nyanza-Lac. Try mukeke, the lake's emblematic fish, often served grilled. The authorities advise against swimming in the lake, because of hippos, crocodiles and waterborne diseases such as bilharzia.

Day 9 · Back to Bujumbura and departure (night : Flight home)
Drive back to Bujumbura along the lakeshore road, about seventy-five kilometres, or an hour and a half to two hours depending on traffic and checkpoints. The road offers lovely views of the Congolese mountains across the water. Depending on your flight time, enjoy a last break on a Bujumbura beach or a final visit to the market to buy basketry and wooden crafts. Melchior Ndadaye International Airport is north of the city: leave plenty of time, choose a flight that leaves before 9 pm if you can, as the French authorities recommend, and do not take the road north towards Cibitoke, where all travel is advised against.

Getting around

The most practical option is to hire a car with a driver for the whole trip: the main roads are paved but winding, and the authorities advise against driving at night in the provinces. Fuel shortages have been reported recently: fill up whenever you can and allow some leeway. Public minibuses exist, but they are slow and uncomfortable. The only land border currently open for crossing is with Tanzania, as the Rwandan border is closed. Check the official travel advice before you leave.

When to go

The best time is the long dry season, from June to September: the tracks are passable, the skies are often clear and the hills are easy to explore. From December to January, a short lull in the rains is possible, but showers remain frequent. The rest of the year, especially from February to May, heavy rain makes some roads difficult and paths slippery. It is hot and humid by the lake, cooler in the highlands of Gitega and Bururi.

Practical information

Burundi

Entry	Depends on your passport: visiterafriqueunie.com/en/visa/burundi/
Yellow fever	Certificate required from all travellers
Malaria	throughout the country
Currency	Burundian franc (BIF)
Languages	Kirundi, French
Plugs	type C, E · dialling code +257 · UTC+2
Emergencies	police 112 ou 117 · ambulance 112 · fire 112 ou 118

Departure checklist

Documents

☐ Passport valid for at least six months after your return, with blank pages
☐ Visa or e-visa (printed if required)
☐ International vaccination certificate (yellow fever if required)
☐ Travel insurance certificate and assistance number
☐ Paper and digital copies of your passport and bookings
☐ Tickets, bookings and addresses saved offline
☐ International driving permit if you are hiring a vehicle

Health

☐ Travel consultation done and vaccinations up to date
☐ Malaria tablets if your doctor recommends them
☐ First-aid kit: plasters, antiseptic, anti-diarrhoea tablets, rehydration salts
☐ Mosquito repellent suitable for the tropics
☐ Sunscreen, hat and sunglasses
☐ Personal medication and prescriptions

Money and connectivity

☐ Bank told, Visa or Mastercard (and a backup card)
☐ Cash in euros or dollars, recent notes in good condition
☐ eSIM or local SIM card sorted
☐ Plug adapter for the country
☐ Power bank and cables
☐ Offline maps downloaded
☐ Afrique Unie app installed

In the bag

☐ Light clothes that cover up (sun, mosquitoes, places of worship)
☐ A fleece for evenings, dawn safaris and altitude
☐ Walking shoes and sandals
☐ Head torch
☐ Water bottle (ideally with a filter)
☐ Small daypack and waterproof pouches
☐ Luggage padlock

Before you close the door

☐ Your government's travel advice reread
☐ Trip registered with your consular service (if it offers this)
☐ Itinerary and contacts left with someone close
☐ Online check-in done and baggage allowance checked

Notebook made from visiterafriqueunie.com/en/itineraries/burundi-in-9-days/ · information checked in November 2026 against official sources. Entry, health and safety rules change: check them again before you leave (your country's official advice, the embassy of the country you visit).