

Rwanda will name 22 baby mountain gorillas on Sept. 4, as the country seeks to build on conservation efforts that have helped strengthen its tourism industry and bring more business to communities around Volcanoes National Park.

The 21st Kwita Izina ceremony will be held in Kinigi, Musanze District, with about 10,000 people expected to attend. The annual event has become a major international gathering for conservation and tourism since it was launched in 2005.

The Rwanda Development Board (RDB) said Tuesday that the growth in the gorilla population is not an achievement for one institution alone, but a benefit to Rwanda, its people and conservation efforts worldwide.

Eugène Mutangana, executive director of the Rwanda Nature Foundation, said the birth of gorillas reflects years of work to protect their habitat, monitor their health and provide the conditions needed for them to survive and reproduce.



Eugène Mutangana, executive director of the Rwanda Nature Foundation

He said the selection of people invited to name the gorillas is also deliberate, with organizers choosing individuals they believe can help raise Rwanda's profile internationally.

A total of 438 gorillas have been named since Kwita Izina began. This year's 22 will bring the number to 460. The ceremony has drawn politicians, researchers, investors, athletes, artists and other prominent figures over the years.

For Musanze, the event is also a source of economic activity. Northern Province Gov. Maurice Mugabowagahunde said visitors spend money at hotels, restaurants, transport companies, tourism operators, farms, craft businesses and other enterprises.

Musanze has more than 52 star-rated hotels.

Tourism revenues rise

Rwanda's tourism revenues reached \$685 million in 2025, up from \$647 million in 2024, with 1.49 million visitors recorded during the year.

National parks received 155,394 visitors and generated nearly \$40.8 million. Volcanoes National Park accounted for nearly \$35.8 million, the largest share among the country's national parks.



Domestic tourism also increased, with the number of Rwandans visiting national parks rising 8.1% to more than 59,000.

There are about 1,100 mountain gorillas worldwide. RDB says their conservation continues to generate tourism and foreign-exchange earnings while supporting economic activity around their habitat.

Mugabowagahunde said Kwita Izina also helps encourage visitors to extend their stays and explore other destinations in Rwanda.