

# ultimate/ *Encounters*

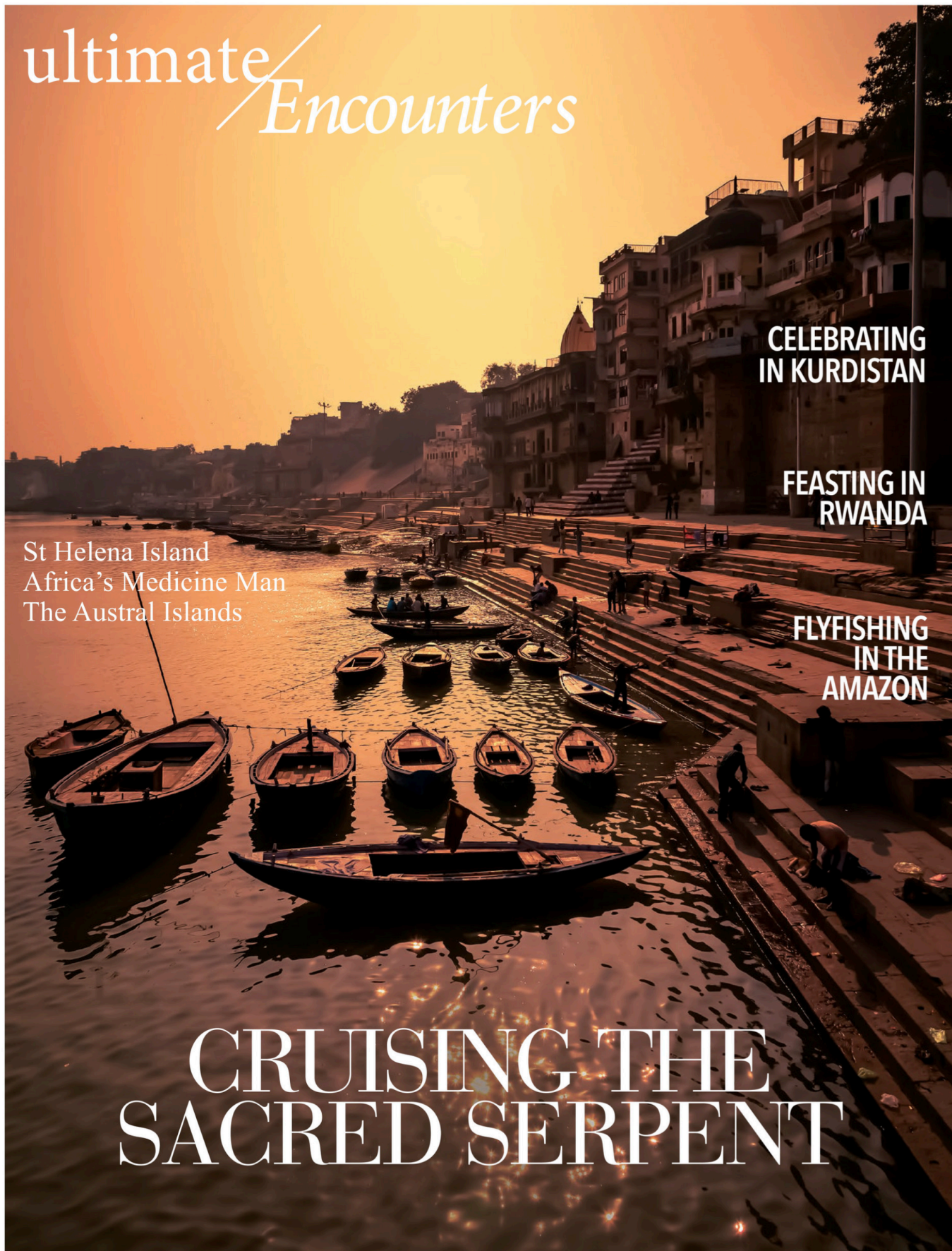
**CELEBRATING  
IN KURDISTAN**

**FEASTING IN  
RWANDA**

**FLYFISHING  
IN THE  
AMAZON**

St Helena Island  
Africa's Medicine Man  
The Austral Islands

# CRUISING THE SACRED SERPENT



# CULINARY & ECO ADVENTURES IN RWANDA

Known globally as the land of a thousand hills, **Rwanda** boasts soul-stirring landscapes, stunning safari eco-lodges and a diverse culinary scene.

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By **KOFI DOTSE**



## RWANDA'S DIVERSE PALATE

Rwanda, like any other East African country, has a rich and diverse culinary heritage, with Belgian, Asian and East African influences. For those who are ready to explore with their tastebuds, traditional Rwandan food delivers a distinctive and savoury experience, even if it may not be as prevalent around the world as other African cuisines. From cooking masterclasses to mouthwatering food treks and kitchen tours, the country's eco-lodges offer the best of Rwanda on the plate.

Embark on a delectable food tour to Nyakinama Village, where you'll indulge in Rwanda's rich food culture and striking flavours while joining the locals in preparing local dishes



and exploring food exchange methods. You'll also get to try *urwagwa*, which is Kinyarwanda for 'banana beer' and is made from the fermented mashed fruit. Not only is the process of making *urwagwa* fascinating, but you'll get to taste this chilled local staple at the end.

At Gorilla Highlands, which is managed by a group of park rangers and culinary masters, guests can include culinary experiences during tailored tours. Starting off, guests can taste Rwandan chocolate at Ronda Musanze, which is renowned for its excellent chocolate crafted with local cocoa cherries. For as little as US\$50, you can even hire the facility and enjoy a half-day chocolate-making class or enjoy an Afro-fusion dinner laced with local ingredients.

You can also enjoy a four-course dinner presented by award-winning chef Rama Sindayigaya. Start with bantou balls, orbs of mashed beans, corn and nuts infused with basil-like Umwenya leaves. The main course, Mama Africa, is beef stew with mashed potato, dodo (spinach) and pickled onions; or crispy tilapia, a fish fillet served with fondant potatoes, baby spinach and olive salsa. Finally, finish off with a delectable fusion of millet, ghee, nuts and honey.

Women-led culinary experiences are slowly becoming the trend in this East African pocket. Rwanda's coffee boasts unusual flavours and is desired by coffee masters and connoisseurs across the globe, and in Kayonza, a two-hour drive from Kigali, get ready to experience Rwanda's coffee origins and meet the incredible women farmers behind your favourite cup of coffee.

At Nyamirambo Women's Center, you can also spend your morning learning to cook local Rwandan cuisine using local ingredients, including cassava, beans, Irish potatoes, plantains, sweet potatoes, and cabbage, and prepare authentic local dishes, including doe-doe, a staple made with greens and eggplants.

**From left:**

Eco-lodges in Rwanda offer the chance to meet local communities and cook a range of authentic local dishes.

# AFRICA



From the market to your meal, Aminatha, a rep from the centre, will guide you every step of the way.

## ECOLOGES OF RWANDA

From the Virunga Mountains to Lake Kivu, Rwanda's eco-lodges not only offer comfort and luxury but also prioritise conservation and community involvement.

Virunga Lodge is famous for its championing of ape tourism. The picturesque lodge is set between two crater lakes, Lake Bulera and Lake Ruhondo, overlooking the iconic Virunga Volcanoes National Park. From offering sustainable gorilla treks to leading community-engagement projects, the retreat is a driving force for the country's eco-tourism industry – don't forget to leave time for a complimentary Rungu massage at Ikirunga Spa & Sauna.





Nestled in the small mining town of Rwinkwavu, in eastern Rwanda, and situated 20 minutes from Akagera National Park, Rutete Eco Lodge is another breathtaking destination immersed in a rich history.

Opened in 2022, with only five rooms, founder Toch Julienne and her team are committed to social advocacy, environmental sustainability and the support of local communities in and around Rwinkwavu. The lodge adopts an organic farm-to-table dining style with tasty meals prepared by local chefs using ingredients from the lodge's own organic farm.

Fragrant flora and fauna welcome you the moment you arrive at One&Only Gorilla's Nest. From brilliant birdlife to thrilling gorilla treks, this luxury eco-lodge ignites your spirit of adventure. Whether your dream is to elevate your healthy lifestyle or discover a new world of spiritual and physical development, once your wildlife adventures are concluded, a wealth of treatments and holistic experiences await, drawing from traditional African wisdom. Be sure to purchase one of the lodge's limited-edition scarves, which are handwoven by a collective of skilled artisans in Ethiopia. ▀



**from opposite page:**

While Rwanda is most famous for its mountain gorilla trekking, the destination is increasingly offering eco-driven experiences to travellers looking to delve into the country's rich culture and culinary heritage

## AFRICA

**R**wanda lies within East Africa's Great Rift Valley, but this is not the only reason it is Africa's best-kept secret. This small country, with its long chain of lush and verdant landscapes, is also where Africa's great lakes collide. With arguably some of the best safari and adventure experiences in Africa, there's an opportunity for both luxury and mid-budget travellers to find something to indulge in.

Rwanda, beyond its untapped beauty, lies as an unparalleled ecotourism scene that blends sustainable living with its unique culture. The country has quickly recovered from its dark past and is thriving as a result of community collaboration and a constant effort to restore its national heritage.

Rwanda's consistency in ecotourism and conservation has also paved the way for development of eco-lodges, which, in addition to fueling the country's tourism sector, gives travellers and leisure seekers an opportunity to immerse themselves in the country's authentic hospitality.

