

## ONE&amp;ONLY NYUNGWE HOUSE

Rwanda

**LOCATION:** Could there be a more quintessentially Rwandan scene than the tea plantations and misty mountains that encircle One&Only Nyungwe House? This landmark new property sits on the western edge of Nyungwe Forest National Park, a vast tropical montane rainforest, five hours from the capital Kigali, that's home to 300 chimpanzees, colobus monkeys and more wildlife, which you can trek out to see on designated trails. The hotel also offers its own extensive adventure programme, including nature walks and nocturnal strolls beneath the equatorial sky.

**FIRST IMPRESSIONS:** Snaking down the drive and into the working tea plantation, past brightly dressed pickers bearing leaf-loaded baskets, the first thing that strikes you is how understated the main building is. This is a hotel that lets the landscape do the talking.

**THE FACTS:** The single-storey building was created by a former head of tourism in Rwanda, who happened upon this scenic picnic spot and decided to build a property. Having taken over management in 2017, One&Only has invested heavily, evidence of which can be seen in the faultless 22 rooms and suites, the new spa and restaurant. The staff are special too. The head chef, Treasure Makwase, has an interesting life story to tell. Ten years ago, he fled the unrest of his native Zimbabwe and ended up living on the streets of South Africa. He got a placement in what was then Gordon Ramsay's kitchen at One&Only Cape Town, had stints at Yas Viceroy in Abu Dhabi and Fregate Private Island in the Seychelles, and

finally returned to Africa to head up the kitchen at One&Only's new Rwandan retreat. The food is just as noteworthy. The green goddess pasta was dressed in tea pesto made from the estate, while a simple broccoli salad mixed with pineapple, goji berries, mint and homemade mayonnaise had us requesting recipe tips from Treasure. A cookbook must be in the making?

**EXPLORE:** Tea has been grown on the estate for more than 50 years. It's a tradition which One&Only keeps alive with a tea lounge, tea-infused cocktails and expert-led tea ceremonies, where guests can pick their own. Rare primates, such as mangabey, owl-faced monkeys, colobus and chimpanzees, can also be spotted on tracking trips organised by the hotel. One of the most popular is the moderate Igihigishigi Trail, which includes a canopy walkway, while the more strenuous Kamuranzovu Trail takes you past banks lined with begonias and wild orchids to a waterfall whose name is a nod to the elephants which once stamed here.

**WOW:** Rising early each day to watch Rwanda's iconic mist rise over the mountains was a highlight. Closely followed by glimpsing monkeys gamboling above the hotel's infinity pool, and ending each day stoking the fire in our suite as darkness fell over the forest.

**BOOK IT:** *Rooms at One&Only Nyungwe House start from £450, including full-board meals, non-alcoholic drinks and two daily activities per person.*

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PHOTOS: JAMES HARRIS