

Rwanda Trek

Kigali, 15 – 22 March 2025



Kigali – The Land of a Thousand Hills **A Journey of Discovery and Hope**

The Africa Caucus at Harvard Kennedy School led a student trek to Rwanda with a shared ambition: to understand a country that speaks the language of recovery, vision, and resolve. Over thirty students joined from across four Harvard schools – the Kennedy School, the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences, the Graduate School of Design, and the Business School. Each came with curiosity. Each came with questions.

We stepped into Kigali to learn. We met with government leaders. We sat with entrepreneurs. We walked through institutions shaped by purpose. Along the way, we listened to stories of struggle and reinvention. We tasted the food, heard the rhythm of the city, and saw a nation where policy and people move in the same direction. Rwanda does not rest in memory. It builds. It adapts. It reaches forward with a steady hand.

Memory as a foundation

Kigali Genocide Memorial



Every journey into Rwanda begins with memory. Ours led us to the Kigali Genocide Memorial, where silence carries more weight than words. We came to understand the greatest crisis in the country's history. We came to stand still in a place that speaks without raising its voice.

In 1994, Rwanda broke. In a span of one hundred days, over a million of Tutsi lives vanished under the grip of hate. The killings did not erupt from chaos. They followed years of division, manipulation, and silence. Rwanda carries that memory with precision. The Kigali Genocide Memorial gathers the stories, the names, the weight of loss. It does not turn tragedy into spectacle. It treats it as responsibility. What we saw there began to show us the price of peace and the weight of forgetting.

Reimagining Development

Rwanda Development Board

At the Rwanda Development Board, ambition speaks through structure. From the first meeting, we understood this institution as more than a gateway for investors. It acts as an architect for national growth, with every regulation, incentive, and reform placed with intent.

We heard about strategies that invite capital without surrendering direction. Sectors receive focus—information technology, tourism, agro-processing, financial services. Bureaucracy moves with speed. Companies register in a matter of hours. The message remains clear. Rwanda does not wait for interest. It shapes it. The Rwanda Development Board reflects a government that approaches development not as a hope, but as a discipline.





When drones deliver hope

Zipline Muhanga

Innovation in Rwanda often begins where roads end. Zipline, a company founded by a Harvard College student, saw that geography should not dictate who lives and who dies. In response, it turned the sky into a delivery route.

From a rural distribution center, we watched unmanned aircraft lift into the air.

Each carried a small package—blood, medicine, vaccines—toward a clinic that might otherwise wait too long. Zipline does not operate with spectacle. It works with quiet regularity.

The drones arrive. The supplies drop. The system repeats. What begins as a technical feat becomes a form of public health.

Zipline gives more than efficiency. It creates jobs. It builds capacity. It places life-saving logistics in the hands of local teams who fly without leaving the ground.





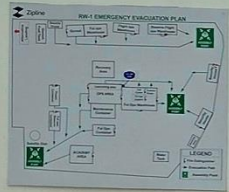
In Nyamabuye, where roads vanish, drones take off.



Zipline

Muhanga

FLIGHT OPERATIONS

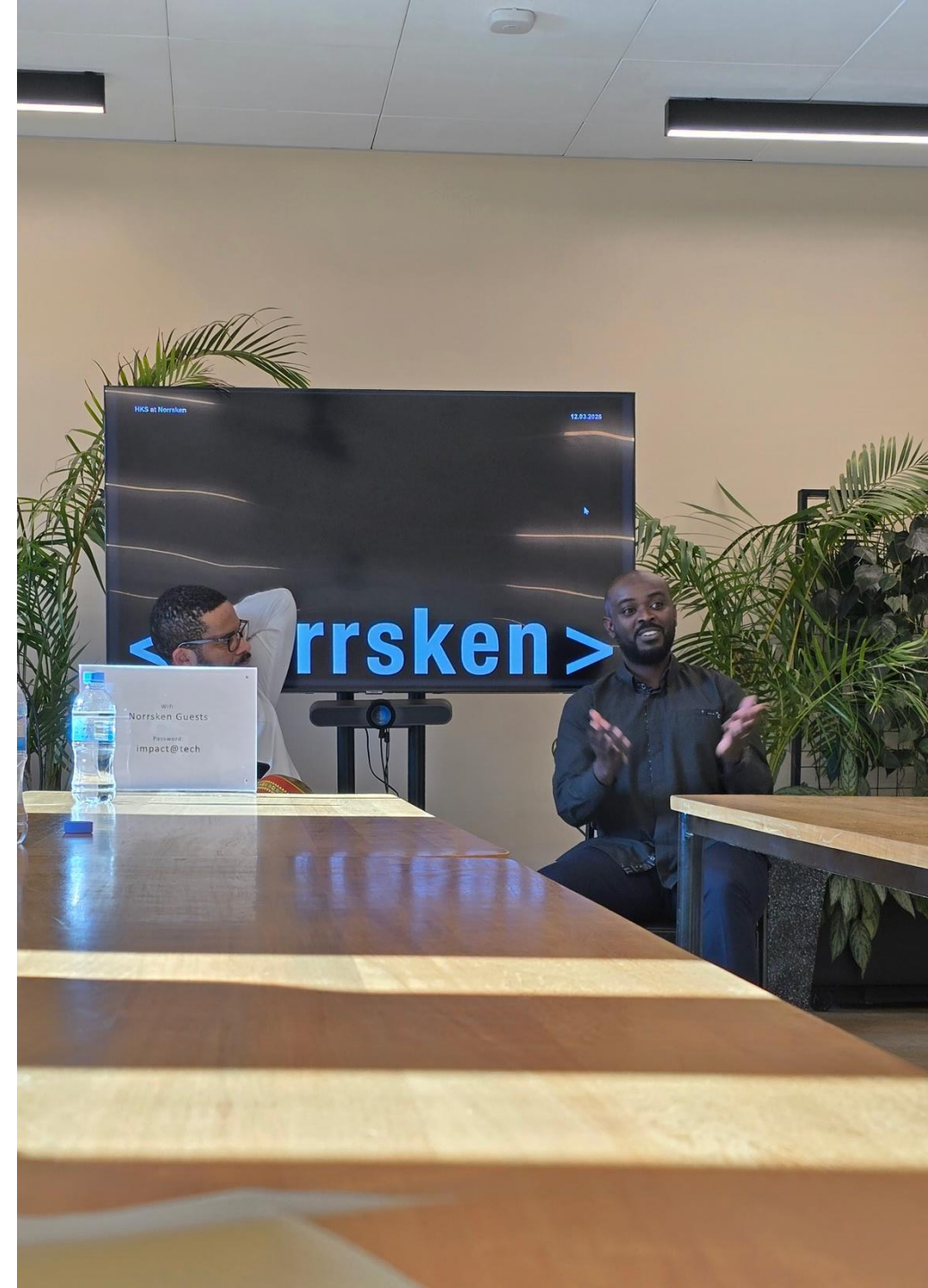


The pulse of startups

Norrskén Kigali House

At Norrskén House, Kigali feels like it runs on electricity. Inside the glass walls, founders pace between whiteboards and coffee cups. Ideas move faster than small talk. This is not a co-working space. It is a statement.

We spent an afternoon walking through the building, floor by floor. Startups worked on financial access, climate resilience, digital learning. The energy came from more than funding. It came from clarity. Kigali does not treat entrepreneurship as a side project. It sees it as a path to sovereignty. At Norrskén, ambition holds structure. Vision finds community. The city invites its young builders to stay, grow, and lead from home.





Ministry of Justice



Ministry of Justice

At the Ministry of Justice, the conversation centered on law as a foundation. Officials laid out a vision grounded in accountability, transparency, and service to citizens. The legal system was set to move with the society. Rwanda approaches justice as a long project, one that begins with institutions but depends on trust.



Kigali International Financial Centre (KIFC)

Kigali International Financial Centre is a financial centre that is intended to transform Rwanda into an international financial destination for investors seeking opportunities across the African continent.

We heard of the different initiatives and partnerships KIFC has engaged to support Rwanda's ambitious goal of becoming a leading financial services hub in Africa.



Ministry of Education





Ministry of Education

At the Ministry of Education, we found policy shaped by purpose. Officials spoke without slogans. They spoke about access, equity, and the weight of preparing a generation for a future that demands both skill and judgment. The strategy focuses on foundational learning in early years, practical training in adolescence, and a steady shift toward science, technology, and innovation.

Ministry of ICT and Innovation





Ministry of ICT and Innovation

At the Ministry of ICT and Innovation, we saw how Rwanda turns technology into a tool for inclusion. Officials spoke about expanding broadband, building digital public services, and opening innovation spaces across the country. With a clear goal to have every citizen getting access to information, education, and government without delay.



A city that breathes with intention

Rwanda Green Fund

Kigali grows with intention, guided by a vision that ties urban development to environmental responsibility and social well-being. During our visit to the Rwanda Green Fund and Kigali Innovation City, we explored how the city approaches growth not as expansion for its own sake, but as a way to shape a more resilient and inclusive future.

The Rwanda Green Fund channels climate finance into projects that restore ecosystems, improve livelihoods, and strengthen the country's climate readiness. Kigali Innovation City builds on that foundation by creating a space where research, education, and entrepreneurship can thrive together. These efforts reflect a broader urban philosophy that treats planning as both a technical exercise and a civic commitment.

House of Tayo

Every Thread Has Its Tailor



We listened to the vision behind House of Tayo, known for its passion for storytelling through both lifestyle and fashion to tell African stories.

House of Tayo was created out of the desire to find a unique way through which to showcase African sophistication, style and flavour through contemporary, locally-made clothing and accessories. They are a distinctly Rwandan-born brand that works with local artisans and tailors and in doing so we support the local community by providing stable income and employment opportunities.

The brand is truly authentic and homegrown, utilizing African textiles and fabrics, and produced by Rwandan tailors and artisans.

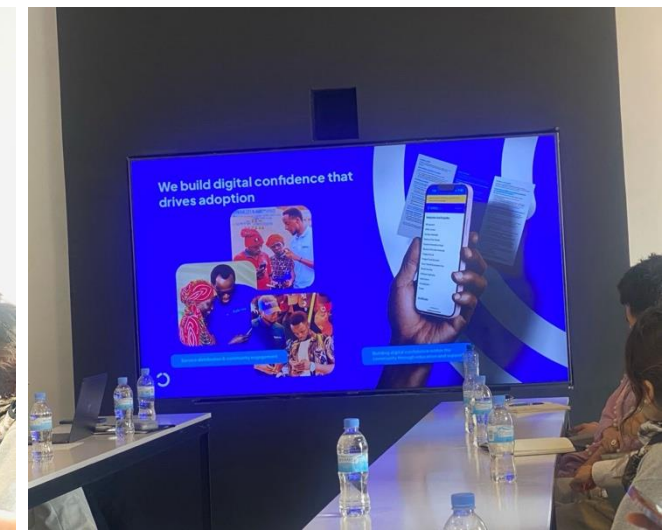
Irembo

At Irembo we learned how they are using design and technology to build digital products that help organizations deliver world-class online services and payments.

Irembo is a technology company founded in Kigali in 2014 to make Rwanda a digital society. Irembo launched its first product in partnership with the Government of Rwanda, IremboGov in July 2015

As a Digital Services Partner of the Rwandan Government, Irembo delivers services and innovative digital solutions that enable public agencies to process millions in revenue digitally and help citizens access public services efficiently.

Today, Irembo is expanding its product offerings to allow any organization, public or private, to digitally transform and offer its users better services with meaningful impact.



African Leadership University: Educating for the long game

At the African Leadership University in Kigali, education begins with a different premise. The university's approach places students at the center, giving them the tools to lead in a world shaped by uncertainty, innovation, and rapid change.

The ambition of the school is to equip students to tackle real-world challenges, build ventures, and learn by doing. The curriculum blends leadership, problem-solving, and entrepreneurship in ways that reflect the urgency of Africa's development needs.

Rwanda sees institutions like ALU as part of its long-term strategy to prepare a generation that leads with both skill and purpose.



Smart Africa

Connect – Innovate - Transform

Smart Africa is a bold and innovative commitment from African Heads of State and Government to accelerate sustainable socio-economic development on the continent, ushering Africa into a knowledge economy through affordable access to Broadband and usage of Information and Communications Technologies.

On 30th-31st January 2014, The SMART Africa Manifesto was endorsed by all Heads of State and Government of the African Union at the 22nd Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union in Addis Ababa. This development places the Manifesto at the heart of the ICT agenda in Africa beyond just the seven original signatories at the Summit to all 53 African countries. This alliance has since grown to include 40 African countries that represent over 1 billion people.





United Nations in Rwanda

The United Nations in Rwanda works as a partner to national development, supporting the country's efforts to advance human rights, reduce poverty, and strengthen institutions. Our discussions with the UN Resident Coordinator helped us understand that its work aligns with Rwanda's own national strategies, offering technical support, capacity building, and targeted funding across key sectors.





One evening in Kigali, we gathered with a dozen Harvard alumni who now live and work across Rwanda.

The atmosphere was warm, reflective, and forward-looking, as stories moved between personal journeys and professional impact.

Through conversations spanning public policy, health, entrepreneurship, and finance, we saw how these graduates are helping shape Rwanda's next chapter.



AlumNight in Kigali



On Fridays, Kigali Breathes



Some of us went to watch Nigeria face off with Rwanda in a packed stadium. Others went north to meet the mountain gorillas. One was loud and electric, the other quiet and majestic. Both were unforgettable.

When the Super Eagles took the field, Africa gathered in rhythm. When the gorillas moved through the forest, the silence told its own story.



Thank you, Kigali!



Thank you, Kigali!

"Rwanda does not rest in memory. It builds. It adapts. It reaches forward with a steady hand" – Romaric Ngambo

A special thank you to the [Embassy of Rwanda](#), [the United States of America](#) and [The African Leadership University](#) for their invaluable support in making this trek possible. And we left inspired, hopeful, and deeply committed to fostering further collaboration with Rwanda.

To my fellow peers who made this experience incredible – thank you for your curiosity and engagement. This was more than a trip; it was a testament to what's possible when we listen, learn, and lead together.

Joannes Yimbessalu – Africa Caucus @ Harvard Kennedy School, Trek Lead