THE WAVERLEY SERIES

RWANDA

An Insight of Investment, Trade and Economy

September 2026

For Advisory & Partnership

LORD WAVERLEY

office@lordwaverley.com • www.lordwaverley.com

RWANDA — AT A GLANCE

Capital	Kigali
Population	≈ 14 million
Real GDP growth	9.4% (2025); Q1 2026 recorded 10% year-on-year and Q2 2026 9.4%, among the fastest growth rates in the world; projected to moderate to 7.0% for full-year 2026 before recovering to 7.4% in 2027
Inflation	Annual inflation reached 15.7% in August 2026, a sharp rise; the National Bank of Rwanda has raised its policy rate to 6.75% in response
Fiscal deficit	Narrowed to 5.5% of GDP in 2025, projected to widen again to roughly 6.0% in 2026
Public debt	Climbed to 75.0% of GDP
Current account deficit	Widened sharply to 13.1% of GDP in 2025, projected to reach 14.9% in 2026, driven substantially by investment-related imports for major projects including Bugesera International Airport
Currency	Rwandan franc (RWF)
Key exports	3T minerals (tin, tungsten, tantalum), which rose 46.2% in 2025 and remain a primary driver of economic expansion; gold; coffee and tea
Principal partners	China (mineral processing destination), Pakistan (new investment forum), regional East African Community markets; World Bank, IFC, MIGA
Governing framework	President Paul Kagame, in power since 2000 and re-elected in July 2024 with 99.18% of the vote; World Bank Country Partnership Framework FY21-FY26; Rwanda Development Board leads investment promotion

Rwanda continues to post some of the fastest, most broad-based economic growth rates in the world, with a genuinely dynamic mining sector anchoring a Q2 2026 expansion in which industry grew 18% year-on-year. Rwanda's 3T mineral exports, tin, tungsten and tantalum, rose 46.2% in 2025 alone. That same mining sector, however, sits at the centre of an intensifying international sanctions controversy: the US Treasury has sanctioned Rwanda's own defence force and a Kigali-based gold refinery, and the European Union has separately listed the head of Rwanda's state minerals authority, over allegations that minerals extracted from rebel-held eastern DRC territory are smuggled through Rwanda toward international markets. President Kagame has personally and forcefully denied these allegations. Investors considering Rwanda's mining and minerals sector specifically should treat this as a genuinely live, material compliance question rather than a settled matter.

1. INVESTMENT & FDI

Rwanda continues courting new bilateral investment relationships and pressing its development board toward measurable results, even as its mining sector navigates an active sanctions controversy.

President Kagame joined the Rwanda Development Board's Board of Directors for a meeting on 2 September 2026, telling the agency directly that attracting investors is only part of the job and stressing delivery, accountability and continuous improvement of the business environment. Rwanda offers 100% foreign ownership across all sectors with no restrictions on capital movement, according to organisers of this month's Rwanda-Pakistan Investment Forum. Separately, and materially, the US Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control sanctioned the Kigali-based Gasabo Gold Refinery and its chairman on 26 June 2026, alleging involvement in smuggling an estimated 60 kilograms of gold from rebel-held areas of eastern DRC, while the European Union has separately listed Francis Kamanzi, chief executive of Rwanda's own Mines, Petroleum and Gas Board, over alleged involvement in conflict-mineral exploitation.

- **A direct presidential push for investment delivery:** Kagame's explicit instruction to the RDB to focus on results, not just attracting investor interest, reflects the government's recognition that Rwanda's small domestic market and landlocked geography require converting investment pledges into genuine operating businesses.
- **A genuinely open formal investment regime:** 100% foreign ownership permitted across all sectors, with no capital-movement restrictions, represents one of the more liberal formal investment frameworks among the markets this series covers.
- **Direct, named sanctions exposure in the mining sector specifically:** the US Treasury's sanctioning of Gasabo Gold Refinery and its chairman, alongside the EU's separate listing of the head of Rwanda's state minerals authority, represent concrete, named designations that create genuine compliance risk for any investor or financial institution considering exposure to Rwanda's gold and minerals trade specifically.
- **Continued multilateral development finance:** the World Bank Group's portfolio in Rwanda comprises 25 projects with $3.2 billion in net commitments as of March 2026, alongside MIGA's $40.7 million in active guarantee exposure across water, fintech, tourism and energy projects.

2. TRADE & BUSINESS

A booming 3T minerals export sector sits directly at the centre of an active, contested international conflict-minerals controversy.

Rwanda's exports of tin, tungsten and tantalum, the so-called 3T minerals central to global electronics manufacturing, rose 46.2% in 2025, with the mining and quarrying sector expanding a further 26% year-on-year in the second quarter of 2026 alone, the fastest-growing industrial sub-sector. The US Treasury's own June 2026 sanctions statement asserts that minerals sourced from eastern DRC are in many cases smuggled through Rwanda before being transported to major refining and processing countries such as China, and specifically describes Rwandan government forces maintaining oversight of gold transport from M23-held areas in DRC to Rusizi District, Rwanda, immediately across the border from Bukavu. The UN Panel of Experts has separately reported that large volumes of coltan continue moving monthly from DRC's Rubaya mine into Rwanda following the armed group's 2024 takeover of that site. President Kagame has firmly rejected these characterisations, telling Rwanda's National Dialogue Council in February 2026 that 'if Rwanda were in the DRC because of its precious minerals, it would be much richer than it is now.'

- **A genuinely major export growth driver:** the 46.2% rise in 3T mineral exports represents one of the most significant single-sector growth contributions to Rwanda's overall economic expansion, with direct integration into Asian electronics manufacturing supply chains.
- **Documented US and UN findings on mineral origin:** the US Treasury's specific, sourced description of gold transport routes from M23-held DRC territory into Rwanda, and the UN Panel of Experts' reporting on coltan flows from Rubaya, represent official findings from bodies with direct investigative access to the matter.

- **A firm, direct government denial:** President Kagame's own public rejection of the smuggling allegations, delivered at a formal national dialogue forum, represents Rwanda's clearest and most direct governmental response to the controversy, and reflects a genuinely disputed question between international investigators and the Rwandan government.
- **A contested question investors must weigh independently:** given that both the sourced international findings and Rwanda's government denial are matters of public record, investors in Rwanda's minerals sector specifically should treat the underlying factual dispute as unresolved rather than adopting either position uncritically.

3. MAJOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS

Exceptionally strong, broad-based growth continues even as inflation has risen sharply and a landslide 2024 election extended one of the world's longest-serving single-party governments.

Rwanda's economy expanded 9.4% year-on-year in the second quarter of 2026, following 10% growth in the first quarter, with industry the standout performer at 18% growth, driven by a 24% expansion in construction and 10% in manufacturing alongside mining's 26% surge; GDP reached RWF 7.174 trillion (approximately $4.89 billion) in the quarter alone, up from RWF 5.799 trillion a year earlier. This expansion has come alongside a sharp rise in prices, with annual inflation reaching 15.7% in August 2026. On 15 July 2024, President Paul Kagame, in power since 2000, was re-elected with an official vote share of 99.18%, and his Rwandan Patriotic Front also secured a majority of seats in the Chamber of Deputies; independent governance assessment describes very limited alternative political space in Rwanda, with legal and administrative structures continuing to constrain political expression.

- **Exceptionally strong, broad-based growth:** the consistency of Rwanda's growth performance across construction, manufacturing and mining through the first half of 2026 reflects genuine, multi-sector economic momentum rather than a single-industry spike.
- **A sharp, concerning inflation acceleration:** the rise to 15.7% annual inflation by August 2026 represents a significant deterioration in price stability that the central bank's rate increase to 6.75% has not yet fully contained.
- **A landslide election extending decades of single-party dominance:** Kagame's 99.18% vote share in the July 2024 election, extending his tenure since 2000, reflects a political environment independent assessors describe as offering very limited space for alternative political voices.
- **Continued regional friction over the DRC conflict:** Rwanda's continued military and political involvement in eastern DRC, most visibly its support for the M23 armed group, has strained regional and international relations and drawn growing condemnation from Western governments, a dynamic directly connected to the minerals-sector sanctions described in Section 2.
- **A notable moment of France-Rwanda reconciliation:** President Kagame and French President Emmanuel Macron jointly inaugurated a Rwandan genocide memorial in Paris in 2026, a symbolically significant diplomatic development distinct from Rwanda's more strained relationship with Washington and Brussels over the DRC conflict specifically.

4. MAJOR PROJECTS & INFRASTRUCTURE

Bugesera International Airport remains Rwanda's flagship infrastructure project, directly driving the investment-import surge weighing on the current account.

- **Bugesera International Airport:** the African Development Bank explicitly identifies this project as a major driver of Rwanda's widening current account deficit through investment-related imports, underscoring its scale relative to the broader economy.
- **A construction-manufacturing spillover effect:** 24% construction-sector growth in Q2 2026 directly raised demand for locally manufactured building materials, with output of metal products, machinery and equipment rising 51%, a genuine domestic manufacturing benefit from the infrastructure investment cycle.

5. CONFERENCES, FORUMS & EXHIBITIONS

The Rwanda-Pakistan Investment Forum this month reflects Rwanda's continued push to diversify its bilateral investment-promotion relationships.

- **Rwanda-Pakistan Investment Forum:** held in Kigali from 23-25 September, the three-day forum organised jointly by the Rwanda High Commission in Pakistan and the Rwanda Development Board brought together Pakistani business leaders, investors, exporters, manufacturers and entrepreneurs with Rwandan government and private-sector stakeholders across manufacturing, agribusiness, ICT, mining, tourism, logistics, renewable energy, healthcare and financial services.

6. BUSINESS & INVESTMENT EVENTS

President Kagame's direct engagement with the national investment board signals continued high-level attention to investment-delivery performance.

- **Presidential engagement with the Rwanda Development Board:** Kagame's direct participation in the RDB board meeting, and his explicit emphasis on delivery and accountability rather than headline investment announcements alone, represents a genuine signal of sustained top-level attention to investment-climate execution.

7. GOVERNMENT & INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Rwanda's international relationships span genuine multilateral development partnership alongside an intensifying, sanctions-driven rupture with Western governments over its role in the DRC conflict.

- **World Bank, IFC and MIGA:** the World Bank's $3.2 billion, 25-project portfolio, the IFC's work advancing capital markets development and green finance, and MIGA's guarantee support together represent Rwanda's most substantial multilateral development relationships.
- **United States:** Treasury sanctions on the Rwanda Defence Force, imposed 2 March 2026, alongside subsequent designations in April and June targeting mineral-smuggling networks, mark a significant deterioration in the formal US-Rwanda relationship specifically tied to the DRC conflict.
- **European Union:** the EU's separate listing of a senior Rwandan state minerals official reinforces that sanctions exposure over the conflict-minerals question extends beyond US action alone.
- **Pakistan:** this month's investment forum represents a concrete, active effort to deepen a bilateral economic relationship with a major South Asian market, part of Rwanda's broader diversification of investment partnerships.
- **France:** the joint Kagame-Macron genocide memorial inauguration in Paris reflects continued, active diplomatic engagement with France specifically, distinct from Rwanda's more strained relations with Washington and Brussels.

8. SME & PRIVATE-SECTOR DEVELOPMENTS

A deliberate government push toward private-sector-led growth reflects Rwanda's structural need to diversify beyond public investment given its small domestic market.

Given Rwanda's landlocked geography and relatively small domestic market, sustained growth depends heavily on productivity gains and private-sector expansion rather than public spending alone, a dynamic explicitly acknowledged in the government's direction to the Rwanda Development Board this month. The IFC's parallel work on capital-markets development and green-finance expansion is directly intended to support this private-sector-led transition.

- **A structural rationale for private-sector emphasis:** Rwanda's small domestic market size makes productivity-led, private-sector expansion genuinely more consequential for sustained growth than in larger, more domestically self-sufficient economies.
- **Capital-markets and green-finance development:** the IFC's ongoing work in these areas aims to build the financial infrastructure necessary to support a genuinely private-sector-led growth model over the medium term.

9. NEW INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES / PROJECTS ANNOUNCED

Manufacturing, agribusiness and renewable energy join mining among the sectors Rwanda is actively promoting to new bilateral partners, even as the mining sector's international standing remains contested.

- **Nine priority sectors identified for Pakistani investment:** manufacturing, agribusiness, ICT, mining, tourism, logistics, renewable energy, healthcare and financial services were all specifically flagged for investment exploration at this month's Kigali forum.
- **A genuinely liberal formal ownership regime:** 100% foreign ownership across all sectors, with no capital-movement restrictions, represents a concrete structural opening applicable across any of Rwanda's promoted sectors.
- **Mining-sector opportunities carrying specific compliance considerations:** while Rwanda's mining sector continues posting strong headline growth, prospective investors should weigh the specific sanctions and due-diligence considerations detailed in Sections 1 and 2 before engaging with minerals-sector opportunities specifically.

SUMMARY ASSESSMENT

Rwanda continues to post some of the fastest, most broad-based economic growth rates in the world, with a genuinely dynamic mining sector, an open formal investment regime offering 100% foreign ownership across all sectors, and active bilateral investment-promotion efforts extending as far as Pakistan this month. Strong construction and manufacturing performance, alongside continued multilateral development-finance support from the World Bank Group, all point to genuine underlying economic momentum.

This dynamism sits alongside two significant, distinct risk factors investors should weigh carefully. First, a genuinely live and unresolved international sanctions controversy surrounds Rwanda's mining and minerals sector specifically, with the US Treasury and European Union both having sanctioned Rwandan entities and a senior government-linked official over alleged conflict-mineral smuggling from eastern DRC, allegations

President Kagame has personally and forcefully denied. Second, Rwanda's domestic political system, under President Kagame since 2000 and re-elected in 2024 with 99.18% of the vote, offers very limited alternative political space according to independent governance assessment. Neither factor negates the genuine scale of Rwanda's economic transformation, but both are material considerations for informed investment decision-making.

For investors, particularly those considering exposure to Rwanda's mining and minerals value chain specifically, the coming months offer a concrete signal to watch: whether further sanctions designations follow, whether the underlying DRC conflict and its associated Washington Accords framework move toward genuine resolution, and whether Rwanda's own rebuttals translate into independently verifiable changes in mineral sourcing and export documentation practices.