

Destination Facts

- Full Country Name: Republic of Uganda
- Time: GMT + 3 hours
- Area: 241,139 sq km
- Population: 24.7 million
- Head of State: Hon. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni
- Capital City: Kampala
- Other Major Towns: Jinja, Entebbe, Mbarara, Fort Portal, Mbale
- Main Tribes: Baganda, Toro, Ankole, Acholi, Basoga, Lugbara
- Language: English, Swahili, Luganda & indigenous languages
- Religion: Christian (66%), Muslim (5%) and traditional religions
- Currency: Ugandan Shilling (Ush)
- Electricity: 240 V, 50 Hz
- Weights and Measures: Metric
- Economy: Coffee, sugar, cotton, tea, tobacco, textiles

Uganda is a landlocked country in East Africa, bordered by Kenya, Sudan, Congo, Rwanda and Tanzania. Straddling the equator, much of her southern border is dominated by Lake Victoria. It is a tremendously lush country, dotted with lakes and rivers (the most famous being the Nile) and the West is fringed by the glacier-capped Rwenzori Mountains. Winston Churchill referred to Uganda as the "Pearl of Africa" with its vast wilderness areas and perhaps the continent's most diverse range of Wildlife.

The country offers top wildlife destinations, fantastic adventure holidays and the best bird life anywhere. Its hidden valleys and vast grass land plains were once the stamping ground of the infamous elephant hunters. From the snow capped peaks of the Rwenzori Mountains to the awe-inspiring spectacle of Murchison Falls, and from the Impenetrable rain forest of Bwindi to the endless horizons of the central plains, Uganda's scenic diversity and richness of the landscape compares favorably with anywhere on the African continent.

Uganda is also sanctuary to such rare and unusual species of wildlife such as Uganda Kob and the Shoebill stork, together with the magnificent mountain gorilla as well as some of Africa's largest concentrations of crocodile and hippo. The Pearl of Africa is indeed a compelling and awesome destination and Crocodile Racers are delighted to extend to you an invitation to follow in the foot steps of those early explorers like Speke, Grant and unlock the secrets of this priceless African gem.

Health

Visitors over 1 year of age from yellow-fever infested areas require yellow fever international certificate of vaccination. Exemptions are made for visitors arriving from non-endemic areas such as Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand. Visitors from non-endemic areas, if traveling outside urban areas are encouraged to obtain a vaccination. Cholera is a serious health risk in this country and precautions are called for. Typhoid is also widespread and immunization is advisable. Most prescription drugs can be bought affordably and with ease over the counter in Kampala. Personal insurance is advised.

Malaria is widespread throughout the country including urban centers such as Kampala, Fort Portal, Jinja, Mbale and the Kigezi area. Visitors are strongly advised to take anti-malaria medication commencing two weeks before travel. Note that resistance to chloroquine has been reported. Bilharzia is a risk and you are advised not to swim or paddle in fresh water lakes and rivers. Swimming pools in good hotels and clubs are usually well chlorinated and maintained and are safe. Tuberculosis and hepatitis (A, B & E) are present in Uganda.

HIV-AIDS is prevalent in the country and needless to say prudent measures are necessary. Good hospitals, health facilities and chemists are only found in the main towns. Medical facilities for advanced treatment including surgery are scarce even in Kampala.

Visas

Passports valid for 3 months from date of entry are required of all visitors. All visitors require a visa except for citizens of some Caribbean and African countries. There are also exceptions for citizens of Cyprus, Fiji, Malta, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu and a few other countries.

Some visas may be issued on entry into the country. It is however advisable to obtain visa's in advance from Ugandan Embassies and High Commissions as some airlines may require it before allowing you to board. Entry may be refused to travelers with no proof of sufficient funds and return or onward tickets. Visa requirements vary from time to time and you are advised to check on prevailing status well ahead of travel.

People & Culture

Uganda's people are complex and diverse. Bantu speakers, widespread in east, central and southern Africa, include the Baganda and a few other tribes. In the north, the Acholi and Lango are Nilotic speakers and have much in common with natives of southern Sudan. The Teso and Karamojong found in the east are related to the Maasai found in Kenya and Tanzania. In the west, the Ankole and Toro are culturally close to the natives of Rwanda. The famous Pygmies are found in the forests of the west.

As a nation, Uganda is an amalgamation of ancient kingdoms and independent chieftains. Among the indigenous kingdoms are the Baganda, Bunyoro, Toro, Ankole and Busoga. The Kingdoms were suppressed in the times of the troubles that razed the country in the two decades after 1967. Today they have been restored with their ancient privileges shorn and play only a ceremonial role in the life of the nation. The Baganda king, the Kabaka, whose domicile is Kampala has historically been the most prominent. His lineage stretches back to the 14th century.

Swahili, the language originating from the east African coast is widely spoken though not as well as in Kenya or Tanzania. Luganda, the language of the Kabaka, is also widely spoken. English is understood by good numbers though only in urban areas. For the most part, local cuisine consists of matoke (a staple based on green bananas), millet bread, cassava, sweet potatoes, chicken, goat and beef stews and freshwater fish. Ugali, the maize meal based filler popular in east Africa is used as an accompaniment for meat or vegetable dishes. You will easily find a decent locally brewed beer. Popular brands include Bell, Club and Nile Special. The national drink is however a banana gin known as waragi. This is a giant killer and if you imbibe it in immoderate quantities, you will sooner come to grief.

Communications

Telephone, fax, telegram, post and Internet services are available in urban centers. International direct dialing to many countries is available in the principal towns. In rural areas telephony services are unreliable. The country code for Uganda is 256.

Mobile phones are based on GSM 900/1800 network. Coverage extends to the principal towns.

You can obtain a GSM card that will allow you to make international calls to any country. The main network operators are: Uganda Telecom (www.utl.co.ug), Celtel (www.msi-cellular.com) and MTN Uganda (www.mtn.co.ug). You will find Internet cafes in Kampala and some of the main towns.

Accommodation

There is international standard accommodation in Entebbe, Jinja and Kampala. The quality is variable in the smaller towns and rated accommodation is scarce. All of the major national parks offer accommodation in game lodges and tented camps.

Money

The local currency is the Uganda Shilling (Ush). The import and export of local currency is not allowed. There are no restrictions on the import of foreign currency provided it is declared on arrival. On departure, export of foreign currency is restricted to the amount declared on entry. Visa, MasterCard, Diners and American Express are widely accepted at bigger hotels, restaurants, travel agencies and shops

Traveler's Cheques can be cashed at major hotels, banks and forex bureaus. You will do best when your traveler's Cheques are denominated in US Dollars or Sterling Pounds. Foreign currency can be exchanged at the Central Bank, commercial banks and forex bureaus. Generally you will get better exchange rates at forex bureaus. Changing money in the streets is a bad idea. Street traders sometimes deal in funny money.

Climate

Uganda enjoys a tropical climate tempered by altitude. The country is generally flat though the average altitude is about 1000m. Due to the rather high altitude, temperatures range between 21 to 25°C. The mountain areas of Mount Elgon and the Rwenzori mountains are even cooler and the top of both mountains experiences some snow. The hottest period of the year is from December to February when temperature rise 29 degrees Celsius. The country experiences two

rainy seasons: April to May and October to November, with April being the wettest month. The north however has a wet season lasting from April to October. The best times to visit are December-March and June-September.

International Travel

Uganda's only International Airport is at Entebbe, 35 km from the capital Kampala. Outside Uganda, the airport gained fame as the place where Israeli commandos rescued passengers on a hijacked plane, back in the days of the infamous Idi Amin. The dramatic rescue captured the imagination of the world and is the subject of a few films. There are few direct flights to Entebbe from outside Africa and most travelers from Europe, Asia and North America will arrive via Nairobi, the Kenyan capital. Daily connections are available from Nairobi. Airlines landing at Entebbe include British Airways, Egypt Air, Emirates, South African Airways, Kenya Airways, Ethiopian Airlines, SN Brussels, Air Rwanda, and Air Tanzania.

To save on cost, some travelers disembark at Nairobi and take the overnight bus to Kampala. There are two overland crossing points from Kenya: Busia and Malaba. From Mwanza in Tanzania, you can get to Kampala by ferry. You can also enter the country from Tanzania through the Kagera salient between Bukoba and Masaka. Overland travel through Rwanda, Sudan and Zaire is uncertain due to security considerations. Make sure to check the latest situation with the security authorities before committing to travel.

Local Travel

Local flights depart from Entebbe to the principal towns. Most major towns have airstrips, and do most of the National Parks and Game Reserves. There is an extensive service of minibuses connecting most parts of the country from Kampala.

Driving in Uganda is on the left, a legacy of British rule. Rental cars are available at Entebbe and Kampala. You need to show an international drivers license to hire a vehicle. Roads radiate from Kampala and are of varying quality. In the north of the country the security situation is still doubtful and so are the roads. It is a good idea if you are on self-drive to get local advice about the condition of the roads you intend to use.

Travel Insurance

Health and the usual travel insurance are recommended. Check that your travel insurance includes emergency evacuation.

What to Wear

Light clothing is generally adequate in Uganda. But you need warmer wraps and sweaters for the evenings and early mornings. You are also advised to carry some rainwear, just in case. Usually dressing is informal. For both men and women, cotton slacks and flat-heeled comfortable walking shoes are recommended on safari. It is a good idea to bring along a hat and a decent pair of sunglasses for sun protection.

Gorilla Trekking

The minimum age for gorilla trekking is 15 years. Each permit costs \$375 per person per day, \$500 as from 01 July 2007. Chimp permits US\$70.

Please note that gorilla trekking is a strenuous exercise. You need long sleeves, long trousers, rain coat, hiking boots, and water proof bag for your equipment. Make sure you take enough water with you on the trekking. Porters are available to hire for a nominal amount. Although films are available in Kampala, it is advisable to bring your film with you.