



## GENERAL TRAVEL GUIDELINES



### REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

Area: 241,038 sq km

Population: 35,8 million

Capital: Kampala

Country Tel Code: + 256

Electrical: 220/240AC voltage

Language: English (with Kiswahili and Luganda also being widely spoken)

### PASSPORT AND VISA REQUIREMENTS

A visa is required for US citizens to travel to Uganda as is a passport that will be valid for 6 months after your date of entry and at least two blank visa pages are required. If transiting South Africa, an additional blank visa page is required for each entry.

The Uganda Directorate of Citizenship and Immigration Control has implemented online visa application for visitors to Uganda. All visa and work permit (**E-Visa and E-permits**) applications must be completed via the Government of Uganda's website. Under the new application process, **you must apply online** for all immigration services such as visas, permits, and passes **at least two weeks prior to travel**.

**Single entry tourist visa: US \$50.**

### East Africa Tourist Visa : US \$100

The East African Tourist Visa is a collaboration between Uganda, Rwanda and Kenya designed to make the region more attractive as a tourist destination by making travel easier through purchase of a single visa. Tanzania is NOT currently part of this collaboration.

The visa allows multiple entry to the three countries within a 90 day period.

Visitors must obtain their visa from the **issuing authority of the country in which they will first arrive**. **This means if you are arriving in Uganda first, you obtain the visa from the Uganda online portal, and if arriving in Rwanda first, from the Rwanda online portal.**

This visa is only worth it if visitors are travelling to more than one country within the bloc of three. Visitors restricting their holidays to single countries within East Africa need only apply for an ordinary single-entry visa. Once approved, a visa approval letter containing a barcode will be emailed to the client. Visitors are required to print out the approval letter for presentation on arrival in Uganda.

Payment is made on arrival in Uganda to the immigration officer in cash (US Dollars only, newer than 2006 and in good condition).

For the most up-to-date visa information, contact the Embassy of Uganda at 5911 16th Street NW, Washington, DC 20011; telephone (202) 726-7100 or visit their website. Travelers may also contact the Permanent Mission of Uganda to the United Nations in New York. Overseas, inquiries can be made at the nearest Ugandan embassy or consulate.

We recommend that visitors obtain their visas through this site: <https://visas.immigration.go.ug/>

### **HEALTH, INOCULATIONS AND MEDICAL REQUIREMENTS**

Malaria is prevalent in parts of Uganda, and all visitors should also consult their doctor and take one of the prophylactics prescribed.

**Yellow Fever:** Because Yellow Fever is endemic in Uganda, all visitors to Uganda must present a valid Yellow Fever Certificate on arrival.

For further information: <https://www.passporthealthusa.com/>

### **WEATHER**

The climate is warm, though pleasantly varied by location, with average daily temperatures ranging from 20-30° Celsius (approx 70-85 Fahrenheit) depending on location. Bwindi and the area around Fort Portal/Kibale can get cool during the night because of the vegetation and altitude, and northerly, or lower-lying parks such as Kidepo Valley, Murchison Falls and Queen Elizabeth National Park can be much hotter.

The 'wet' seasons are April to May for the long rains and October to November for the short rains (although these seasons are less defined as weather patterns become more unpredictable). However, when hiking in Uganda's rainforests, wet weather is common all year round. Due to the strong nature of Uganda's equatorial sun, we recommend that visitors take all sensible precautions.

### **PACKING TIPS AND BAGGAGE RESTRICTIONS**

Luggage should be kept to a minimum, and is best restricted to one main soft-sided piece and a day bag. Kampala Hotels provide storage facilities. For visitors with internal flights booked as part of their safari, please note the baggage allowance is usually a maximum of 15 kg (33lbs), packed in a soft, flexible bag. However, it can change dependent on your destination or whether you are flying private or scheduled, so always check specific terms with your tour consultant.

There will be opportunities to do laundry along the way and it is always easier in airports /airstrips and in the camps to move a lighter bag.

Please note that there may be an opportunity to store excess luggage and we request that you please discuss this with us before you travel.

We suggest you leave your good jewelry at home, except, of course, jewelry you normally wear at all times. If you do bring very good jewelry, it is strongly suggested that you make use of safe deposit boxes at each hotel/camp which are generally offered free of charge. Holden Safaris cannot be held responsible for any lost or stolen valuables. Check with your insurance company before departure to assure that any valuables you decide to bring are properly insured.

## **ADDITIONAL ITEMS TO BRING**

A hat, sunglasses, high strength sun block, moisturizer, lip salve, insect repellent with you. Also binoculars and a Torch (Flash Light). Glasses – if you wear prescription glasses bring a spare pair. If you wear contact lenses bring a pair of glasses as well since dust can be a problem. Camera equipment, smart phone chargers and adaptors – Lens cleaning equipment and a dust proof camera bag. Spare batteries and memory cards are very important. Dust mask or scarf for dust if you are sensitive.

Also include:

- ❖ Day backpack - very handy for day trips and excursions
- ❖ Money belt or Bag – also to keep travel documents and immunization cards
- ❖ Flashlight – nights are dark
- ❖ Binoculars – so you don't miss a thing!
- ❖ Guidebook / phrase book – extra knowledge is always good
- ❖ A good book for leisure reading
- ❖ Travel diary or journal – you see and experience so much that this is a great way to keep an invaluable record of your amazing journey – just so you don't forget anything!

## **CLOTHING**

The emphasis on clothing is comfort and modesty. Very rarely will visitors be expected to conform to a specific dress code (unless something particular is tabled on their itineraries). It's best to keep shorts and skirts knee-length, and dress appropriately for a relatively conservative and religious culture.

If primate tracking, long hiking trousers are required, with a good pair of walking boots worn with thick walking socks long enough to tuck trousers into. Ideally a good pair of protective leather or canvas gloves should be carried in the client's day bag, to be put on should they encounter thorns or nettles as they make their way through the rainforest. Needless to say, it is sensible to pack waterproofs as well.

Safari wear should be loose fitting and relaxed in style with warm clothing for the colder evenings at Bwindi or early morning game drives on the savannah. Neutral, natural colours are best – to blend into the background for the most unobtrusive wildlife viewing and for practical purposes. Avoid dark blues or blacks which can occasionally attract unwanted attention from some of Africa's insect population. Most hotels and lodges have laundry services, so an excessive amount of clothing should be unnecessary.

If hiking or tracking gorillas or chimpanzees, some good waterproofs and hiking trousers are essential, with a well-fitting pair of walking boots. We also recommend Visitors bring a sturdy pair of leather or canvas gloves to protect their hands if having to grab onto passing tendrils or branches in unfamiliar terrain (see separate document on Gorilla Tracking Guidelines).

## **CURRENCY**

The currency in Uganda is the shilling (UGX), and it is available in useable denominations of 50, 100, 200, 500, 1,000 in coins and 1,000, 5,000, 10,000, 20,000 and 50,000 in notes. There are foreign exchange facilities at Entebbe airport and Kampala, which we recommend using as changing money on safari can be difficult. There is an ATM at Entebbe airport that accepts VISA and dispenses the UGX equivalent of US\$ 160 (GBP Sterling 100, EURO 115) per day, subject to availability. At the time of writing, the current exchange rate is US\$ 1=UGX 2,860.

## **CASH & CREDIT CARDS**

We recommend that you carry a mix of cash and credit cards for convenience and security, and that you change about US\$200-300 of this into Uganda Shillings at the start of your tour. Visitors are advised that if they are carrying US Dollar Cash with them, the notes intended for exchange should be no smaller than \$100 denomination to ease conversion into local currency at a beneficial rate (some smaller denominations can be carried to facilitate change for visa payments, airport tax, or provide tips). **Notes printed earlier than 2006 will be rejected by banks or businesses, as will damaged or marked notes.**

Outside Kampala and Entebbe, credit cards are only accepted in selected hotels or lodges, mostly limited to Visa (please check our lodge profiles for more information). It is standard practice in Uganda to charge a surcharge if processing payment by card – an addition of between 2-8% can be expected.

Drinks (extra to the full board allowance where relevant) are often priced in Uganda Shillings, whereas optional extra activities are usually priced in US Dollars. However, most lodges/suppliers will accept payment in either currency, at their stated rate. Please do check in advance if there is any doubt about what your itinerary includes or excludes, and please see separate guidelines on tipping.

## **UGANDA TIPPING GUIDELINES**

Always remember, tipping is entirely at your discretion with no obligation to pay a tip to either our staff or your guides. However, should you wish to tip, here are some guidelines:

In Entebbe and Kampala

- Guest Relations Staff: US\$5-10 per person per meeting depending on numbers
- Transfer Driver: US\$5-10 per person per transfer depending on group size
- Hotel Staff (Waiters): 10-15% service charge per meal, irrespective of group size, and if not already included in the bill.

Lodges outside of Kampala/Entebbe

- Your lodge should have a staff tip box from which tips are distributed equitably. A tip of US\$10 – US\$20 per traveller for your entire stay should be adequate if service warrants it.

Gorilla tracking

- If you choose to take a porter (highly recommended), the minimum recommended payment is US\$20 per traveller per track. Porters are drawn from local communities, and this payment serves as their wages.
- Guides (1 per group), Trackers (2-3 per group) and Security personnel (2-4 per group) do earn salaries. A recommended tip is US\$25 per day of tracking per traveller. This may be placed in the appropriate tip box for your gorilla group (found at Park Headquarters) for distribution

amongst all the above staff.

Other park guides

- A tip of US\$7-15 per traveller is appropriate each time you receive a guiding service from a park employed guide.

Driver guides

- A tip of US\$5 per traveller per day for larger groups to US\$10 per traveller per day for singles and couples.

Tips may be given in Uganda Shillings or US Dollars (Euros and Sterling are much less welcome), with Uganda Shillings being the preferred option. Please note that if you are tipping in US Dollars, only notes issued in or after the year 2006 are accepted in Uganda. Also notes smaller than US\$50 attract a far lower exchange rate, especially outside of Kampala. Visitors cheques are not really accepted mode of payment in Uganda. Dollars should be converted into Uganda Shillings at the prevailing exchange rate.

## PHOTOGRAPHY

Visitors should bring all necessary photography equipment. Spare camera batteries are recommended, as charging facilities whilst on safari may be limited, and extra memory cards are always recommended.

**Flash photography is not allowed while gorilla tracking so visitors should familiarise themselves with how to alter their film speed setting to a high speed (800ASA equivalent or faster) before meeting with the gorillas – it also helps to be able to disable any sonic alerts or other noises where possible.**

Local people should always be asked before their photograph is taken and photographing military installations (including the Owen Falls Dam at Jinja and the bridge at Karuma Falls), government buildings and policemen is prohibited.

## ELECTRICITY

The mains electricity supply in Uganda is 220-240 volts and standard frequency is 50 Hz. Power sockets are of type G.



Most lodges use generator and inverter systems, with many increasingly introducing solar power or alternative forms of sustainable energy. All lodges have charging points for personal appliances in public areas, and some have them in the rooms also. Visitors should ask about any power restrictions at each lodge to prevent disappointment – sometimes the use of hairdryers and other high-voltage items is forbidden



