

## UGANDA TRAVEL INFORMATION



*In preparation for your trip to Uganda, please find below some interesting facts about the country. For further information you can visit the official Uganda Tourism Authority's website: [www.visituganda.com](http://www.visituganda.com)*



## **Country information:**

*The Republic of Uganda is a landlocked country in East Africa, bordered on the east by Kenya, the north by Sudan, on the west by the Democratic Republic of Congo, on the southwest by Rwanda, and on the south by Tanzania. The southern part of the country includes a substantial portion of Lake Victoria, within which it shares borders with Kenya and Tanzania. Uganda takes its name from the Buganda kingdom, which encompasses a portion of the south of the country including the capital Kampala.*

*Uganda is divided into 80 districts, spread across four administrative regions: Northern, Eastern, Central and Western. The districts are subdivided into counties. A number of districts have been added in the past few years, and eight others were added on July 1, 2006.[8] Most districts are named after their main commercial and administrative towns. Each district is divided into sub-districts, counties, sub-counties, parishes and villages. Parallel with the state administration, five traditional Bantu kingdoms have remained enjoying some degrees of mainly cultural autonomy. The kingdoms are Toro, Ankole, Busoga, Bunyoro and Buganda.*

## *Destination Facts: Uganda*

- *Full Country Name: Republic of Uganda*
- *Area: 241,139 sq km*
- *Population: 24.7 million (2002)*
- *Capital City: Kampala*
- *Other Major Towns: Jinja, Entebbe, Mbarara, Fort Portal, Mbale*
- *Peoples: Baganda, Toro, Ankole, Acholi, Basoga, Lugbara*
- *Language: English, Swahili, Luganda & indigenous languages*
- *Religion: Christian (66%), Muslim (5%) and traditional religions*
- *Government: Republic*
- *Time: GMT + 3 hours*
- *Currency: Uganda Shilling (Ush)*
- *Electricity: 240 V, 50 Hz*
- *Weights and Measures: Metric*
- *Economy: Coffee, sugar, cotton, tea, tobacco, textiles*

## **Visas:**

*You must have a valid passport that does not expire for at least 6 months after your return home date. Please ensure your passport has sufficient blank pages for any visas required and for entry/departure stamps.*

*Visa requirements vary frequently so please check with the appropriate Embassy or Consulate well in advance for up to date information. All passport holders require a visa to enter Uganda. You can obtain this on arrival. The cost is USD 50 per person for a single entry visa (subject to change at any time) to be paid cash on arrival. Make*

*sure you have the exact money on hand, as no change is given and this should be in small amounts as USD100 bills are not always accepted.*

**Medical Insurance:**

*All travellers to Africa should take out comprehensive Medical Insurance prior to travelling abroad and it should cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. It is recommended that visitors carry personal medical supplies with them.*

**Health Precautions:**

*Diseases caused by unsanitary conditions are common throughout the country, and untreated water should be considered unsafe to drink. Hospital facilities are generally poor and outside the major cities, medical facilities are limited. Diarrhoea is the most common complaint for visitors to Uganda.*

*Recommended vaccinations include hepatitis A and typhoid. All visitors require vaccination against yellow fever. Cholera outbreaks occur occasionally, but most travellers are at low risk for infection; bottled water is widely available.*

*Uganda is a malaria area – prophylaxis is highly recommended.*

*Please remember that the best insurance against contracting malaria is to try to prevent one from being bitten:*

- *Use mosquito repellents liberally*
- *Wear long-sleeved shirts and trousers/slacks in the evenings*
- *You should spray your room prior going to dinner with an insecticide like "Doom" which will kill any mosquitoes that may have flown into your room*
- *Mosquito coils are also effective.*
- *Take the malaria tablets recommended for the region you're travelling to, and keep taking them until the course is complete.*
- *If you come down with flu-like symptoms either during, or within four to six weeks after, your visit to a malaria area, seek a doctor's advice immediately.*

**Currency:**

*The Uganda shilling is the legal currency in Uganda. There are no restrictions on money transfer in and out of the country. Payment in hotels and lodges is made by cash, credit cards or traveller's cheques depending on the hotel or lodge. Visa, diners, American Express & Master Cards are accepted. Hotels that accept credit cards levy US\$ 10 as processing charges. Some hotels levy a 5% on total bill. Major hotels charge 18 % Vat on all transaction including room rates.*

*Keep in mind that when using a credit card, the charge appearing on your monthly statement is not necessarily calculated at the exchange rate that was in effect on the day that you actually made the purchase so you may see a higher or lower amount than what you*

*Travellers should bring sufficient cash for their trip if they will be spending time outside of the large cities.*

**Electric current:**

*Electrical current is 220 volts, 50Hz. Three-pin, rectangular blade plugs are in use. While on safari if you need to have your video battery/camera re-charged this can be done while you are out on an activity, therefore, please bring a spare battery for use while the other is being charged. In some camps transformers are provided but to be sure you may wish to bring one in case. Electrical plug outlets are generally not available in individual rooms.*

**Language and culture:**

*There are over 56 dialects spoken which is a reflection of Uganda's multi-tribal society. English is the official language and most Ugandan's are able to communicate fluently in English. All media and business is in English and most Ugandans speak it fairly well. Swahili is the next most commonly understood language, followed by Uganda. The culture of Uganda is made up of a complex and diverse range of ethnic groups. Lake Kyoga forms the northern boundary for the Bantu-speaking peoples, who dominate much of east, central and southern Africa. In Uganda they include the Baganda and several other tribes. In the north live the Lango and the Acholi, who speak Nilotic languages. To the east are the Iteso and Karamojong, who speak a Nilotic language. A few Pygmies live isolated in the rainforests of western Uganda. Each ethnic group has its musical history; songs are passed down from generation to generation. Ndigindi and entongoli (lyres), ennanga (harp), amadinda (xylophone, see Baganda Music) and lukeme (lamellophone ("thumb piano")) are commonly played instruments. An Acholi, Okot p'Bitek, is one of Uganda's most famous writers of folklore, satirical poems and songs. His book *Song of Lawino* (1966) describes the stories told in Acholi songs.*

**Food:**

*The Cuisine of Uganda consists of traditional cooking with English, Arab and Asian (especially Indian) influences. Like the cuisines of most countries, it varies in complexity, from the most basic, a starchy filler with a sauce of beans or meat, to several-course meals served in upper-class homes and high-end restaurants. Main dishes are usually centred on a sauce or stew of groundnuts, beans or meat. The starch traditionally comes from ugali (maize meal) or matoke (boiled and mashed green banana), in the South, or an ugali made from pear millet in the North. Cassava, yam and African sweet potato are also eaten; the more affluent include white (often called "Irish") potato and rice in their diets. Soybean was promoted as a healthy food staple in the 1970s and this is also used, especially for breakfast. Chapati, an Asian flatbread, is also part of Ugandan cuisine. Chicken, fish (usually fresh, but there is also a dried variety, reconstituted for stewing), beef, goat and mutton are all commonly eaten, although among the rural poor there would have to be a good reason for slaughtering*

*a large animal such as a goat or a cow and nyama, (Swahili word for "meat") would not be eaten every day.*

*Various leafy greens are grown in Uganda. These may be boiled in the stews, or served as side dishes in fancier homes. Amaranth (dodo), nakati, and borr are examples of regional greens. Ugali is cooked up into a thick porridge for breakfast. For main meals, white flour is added to the saucepan and stirred into the ugali until the consistency is firm. It is then turned out onto a serving plate and cut into individual slices (or served onto individual plates in the kitchen).*

***Shopping:***

*You will find woodcarving, batik, leather goods, woven baskets, masks and beadwork in shops and markets throughout East Africa. In most of the local markets prices are not fixed and bargaining is expected, while in the safari camps and hotels, prices are generally fixed, are much more expensive but with better quality. In the markets you will generally only be able to pay by cash while in the camp and hotel gift shops credit cards are welcome. Pieces of valuable handicrafts are available at relatively low prices as compared to imported crafts; therefore don't hesitate to snap at the chance. Remember, your bargaining power determines what you pay in the end. The vendors are very easy going and friendly.*

***Communications:***

*The international dialling code for Uganda is +256. The outgoing code is 000 followed by the relevant country code (e.g. 00027 for South Africa). City/area codes are in use, e.g. (0)41 for Kampala. There is extensive cellular telephone network coverage over most of the country with GSM 900, and Internet facilities are available in most large towns.*

***Crime:***

*Visitors should always be alert and cautious especially in the cities. Areas bordering Sudan in the north, the region known as West Nile in the North West (except Arua town, which can be visited by air), and the Karamoja region of north eastern Uganda are insecure and pose a serious risk to travellers. Kidepo Valley National Park should be visited by air only. Security has been heightened in both Bwindi and Mgahinga National Parks in the far south west, bordering the DRC and Rwanda. Most national parks are safe to visit and a holiday to Uganda is generally trouble-free. Kampala, the capital, is a relatively safe city, although visitors should take sensible precautions against opportunistic crime and at night. Theft of EU passports has been on the increase in recent months. Demonstrations and political rallies should be avoided in Kampala and the main towns.*

*Visitors should limit the amount of cash they carry and leave valuables, such as passports, jewellery and airline tickets, in a hotel safe or other secure place. Cameras are highly coveted by thieves, and should be guarded carefully. Because of the*

*potential for fraud, credit cards should only be used in reputable tourist hotels. Travellers are warned to avoid walking alone after dark.*

**Time:**

*Uganda is 3 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time.*

**Climate:**

*The majority of the country has a tropical climate which varies according to altitude. During the year the hottest months are from December to February when the temperature reaches 29 degrees Celsius. The rainy seasons are from April to May and October to November, with the wettest month being April. Temperatures in some parts of the country can be quite cool owing to the country's high altitude, despite its position on the equator. The mountain areas become much cooler and the top of Mount Elgon is often covered with snow. Other parts of the country are much warmer. There is heavy rain between March and May and between October and November.*

*The best times to visit are December-March and June-September. It can be somewhat rainy then, but not as rainy as in the rainy season, March-June. December-February and June-July are the driest times, when things can even be a bit dusty. Although the country lies astride the equator, most of Uganda is on a plateau 3,600-6,000 ft/900-1,830 m above sea level.*

**What to Wear in Uganda:**

*The country has mild winters and the summer days can get quite hot. Lightweight casual clothes can be worn all year round, with a jacket or jersey for early winter mornings and evenings. On safari keep clothes to a minimum and mostly of neutral colouring - khakis, browns and greens. A sunhat, sunglasses, sunscreen and insect repellent are a must.*

***African Sojourns wishes you a truly wonderful holiday***