

# UGANDA

## COUNTRY GUIDE



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# PURPOSE OF THE COUNTRY GUIDE

Welcome to the beautiful country of Uganda! In this document you will find a plethora of information that will be useful during your journey. The information listed in this Country Guide includes cultural guidelines, communication tips and tricks, health and safety recommendations, and so much more

## KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

### Passport

Travelers to Uganda should ensure that the validity of their passports extends at least 6 months beyond the end of their intended stay, and should have at least 2 blank (unstamped) visa pages in their passport to enter and exit the country. If you are out of visa pages, or your passport is going to expire in less than 6 months from the date you plan to exit Uganda, you will need to renew your passport as soon as possible.

We recommend travelers scan a copy of their passport and email it to themselves. This way, you will always have a copy if something happens to it while traveling.

### Visa

Citizens of the United States are required to obtain a visa to travel to Uganda. Please apply for a single-entry tourist visa, which will allow you to enter and remain in Uganda for up to 30 days.

#### To apply for a Ugandan Tourist Visa:

- Online Application – click [here](#)
- Have the following information and documents
  - Copy of your passport
  - A recent passport size photo
  - Round-trip international flight itinerary
  - Hotel Booking or Reservation (Provide an address)
  - Yellow Fever Vaccination Certificate
  - USD \$119.50 for tourist visa single entry

## **Immunizations**

You must be vaccinated against Yellow Fever and present a [Yellow Fever Certificate](#) to enter Uganda. Prior to travel, Elevate Destinations strongly recommends that you look into recommended immunizations for your time in Uganda. Given that we are not a licensed Health Care provider, we cannot advise travelers on which immunizations they may need. We recommend that all travelers do the following:

- a) Consult with a travel clinic or your personal physician regarding immunizations and other precautions you may need to take in order to participate in this journey. You will need to do this well in advance of your trip as some vaccinations require time to take effect, and you may need to allow time between a series of shots.
  
- b) Visit the CDC Website for Uganda to view recommended vaccines and medicines, travel health notices for the region, and other tips for staying healthy and safe.

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## Other Health Considerations

This will be an amazing journey, but as with all travel, a spirit of adventure and a degree of flexibility will enhance your enjoyment of this program. This will be a moderately active program, with considerable walking on some days and a number of travel days with early departures and activities scheduled throughout the day.

We recommend a medium level of physical fitness, as some of the drives may be long, with sections of bumpy roads. For the most satisfying experience, and in fairness to your fellow travelers, please note that this trip requires the following:

- Ability to walk at least one mile without difficulty
- Ability to spend extended periods of time on your feet
- Ability to climb sets of stairs without assistance
- Ability to keep pace with an active group of travelers and to be on time for all scheduled activities
- Ability to ride comfortably in a vehicle for extended periods of time

Additionally, plan to carry along an adequate supply of any prescribed medications you may require while traveling. Prescription medicines should always be carried in your hand luggage (not in checked baggage) in their original, labeled containers only.

## Safety Recommendations

Uganda is a relatively safe country, however you should always keep in mind these basic ground rules for travel safety:

- Keep all valuables in the hotel safe or in a locked suitcase.
- Avoid flashing money. Be mindful of your belongings at all time. Keep bags in front of you in crowds, and on your lap when at restaurants.
- Pay attention: avoid walking around with your smartphone in hand.
- Be vigilant when crossing roads.
- Stick with the group.
- Always make sure that others know of your whereabouts and movements.
- Avoid street protests or large gatherings.
- Do not wear expensive or sentimentally valuable jewelry while traveling.
- Let your guide know if you have any safety concerns.



## Communications

The country code for Uganda is +256. To call numbers in Uganda from the U.S. dial 011 + 256 + area code + local number

**Wi-Fi:** Wi-Fi is available in your hotel, however, speed, bandwidth, and availability may fluctuate. The signal strength may be stronger in the lobby as opposed to your individual hotel room.

**International Calls:** If you are in Uganda and trying to reach a number in the US, dial 00 before dialing the country code and local number.

**Staying connected:** Here are the most common methods for making local/international calls:

1. **Smart Phone apps:** Apps such as WhatsApp (when Wifi is available).
2. **Getting an international calling package:** Setting up international coverage from your cell phone provider for the duration of your trip is often the simplest option and the best to avoid roaming charges.
3. **Use a local phone / SIM card:** SIM cards are available for international travelers for making calls within Uganda as international calls can get expensive. Please be aware of any requirements your phone has in order to accept the local SIM cards (i.e. size of SIM card, jailbroken, etc). Please let your guide know if you would like assistance purchasing a local SIM. To purchase a local SIM card, you will need to provide a copy of your passport.

## Essential Travel Documents

In case of emergency, it is advisable to make photocopies of your important documents and leave a few copies in your luggage, your money belt, and with relatives or friends at home. Also email a scanned copy to yourself or take a screenshot or photo of the document and save it in an “Important Travel Documents” folder in your photo app on your phone.

### Smart Traveler Tip!

We recommend that all travelers from the U.S. sign-up for the [State Department’s Smart Traveler Enrollment Program](#)! This is a free service provided by the U.S. Government to U.S. citizens who are traveling to, or living in, a foreign country. STEP allows you to enter information about your upcoming trip abroad so that the Department of State can better assist you in case of an emergency. Enrolling in this program has enormous benefits in case of an emergency while abroad:

- You will receive information from the Embassy about safety conditions in your destination
- Enrolling lets the U.S. Embassy in that country know that you are there and helps them contact you in an emergency, whether natural disaster, civil unrest, or family-related.

*These are the documents you should have printed and with you during your travel:*

- A photo copy of your passport
- A photo copy of your visa receipt
- Yellow Fever vaccination certificate

- International flight itinerary or e-tickets
- Travel and medical insurance policy details and 24-hour emergency number
- Details of relatives/friends and your primary care physician to be contacted in an emergency
- Bank and credit card details, camera serial numbers etc.

## Money

The local currency in Uganda is the Ugandan Shilling (USh). The Ugandan Shilling comes in the following denominations:

**Banknotes:** USh 1000, USh 2000, USh 5000, USh 10,000, USh 20,000, USh 50,000

**Coins:** USh 1, USh 2, USh 5, USh 10, USh 50, USh 100, USh 200, USh 500, USh 1,000

### Smart Traveler Tip!

Be sure to notify your bank and credit card companies of your travel plans, in case they view your activity as fraudulent and put a block on your card.

**For your extra personal costs and shopping, bringing USD \$30-\$50 per day is a good rule of thumb.**

Local currency can be obtained at authorized facilities (such as ATMS, hotels and banks). It is recommend to obtain money from an international ATM at the airport upon arrival, taking out around \$50-100 USD or USh 186,000 - 372,000.

**Cash & Exchanging Money:** Local currency is used in most places, especially smaller stores and markets. Ask for smaller bills when getting cash or change as some smaller vendors may not carry change for bigger bills.

If you exchange money, do so only at authorized outlets such as banks and hotels, and exchange only what you think you will spend in-country. Reconversion on departure may be difficult. Coins cannot be reconverted. Save all receipts from any currency exchange transaction. You may be asked to produce them when you exit the country, and they are required if you intend to reconvert local currency. To see what the current exchange rate is, check online at <https://www.xe.com/currencyconverter/>.

\*Note: You will need your passport to exchange money at a bank or Bureau.

We recommend bringing \$200 - \$300 in USD cash in case of emergency and for personal spending. If you bring USD, your bills should be:

- **New** (printed in the last 5 years)
- **In pristine condition** (no rips, tears, smudges, markings, creases, etc)

**Credit Cards:** Credit cards (mainly Visa and MasterCard) are accepted in larger establishments and hotels. Cash is more appropriate everywhere else. Most merchants will typically charge an additional fee for a credit card transaction.

**ATM/Debit Cards:** You can use your debit card to withdraw money from select international ATMs in Uganda.

Banks, and ATMs are available in most major cities, and your guide can generally help with withdrawing cash throughout your trip. There is usually a small fee per transaction on top of what your own bank charges for withdrawing cash at an ATM.

*Note: ATMs in remote areas can be finicky, and may not work on a given hour or day. We recommend traveling with 2 or 3 crisp \$100 bills stored safely in your carry-on luggage to be exchanged in the case that ATMs are not working for you.*

## IN-COUNTRY INFO

### Time

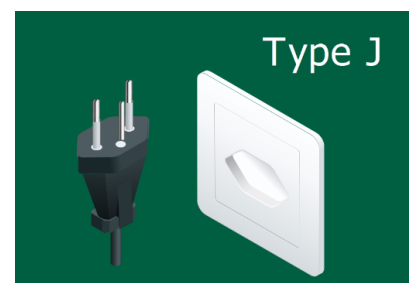
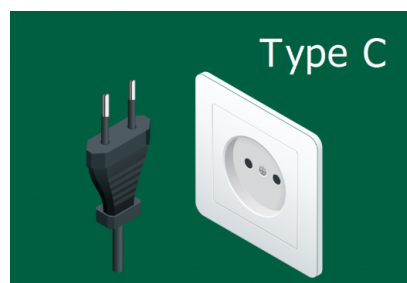
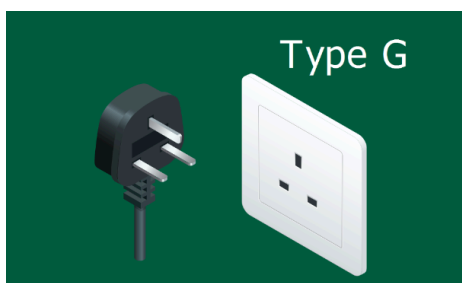
Uganda follows East Africa Time, which is UTC+3. Therefore, time in the locations of your visit will be 10 hours ahead of Pacific Standard Time (PST) and 8 hours ahead of Central Standard Time (CST).

#### Smart Traveler Tip!

Consider downloading a conversion app for things like currency, temperature, time, and distance while traveling. Here are some apps that we like: Units - Free Unit Converter, Convert Units for Free, Converter+, GlobeConvert

### Electricity

The voltage/hertz in Uganda is 240v/50Hz. Type G plugs are the most common in Uganda, but you may also encounter types C and J (see images below). The following images show the type of plugs, sockets, and adapters you can use while traveling in Uganda. To keep your electronics up and running, we suggest purchasing a universal plug.





## Water & Food Safety

We strongly recommend not drinking the tap water in Uganda. Bottled water is inexpensive and readily available. Elevate Destinations encourages travelers to pack a reusable water bottle to fill up with clean drinking water and to reduce usage of single-waste plastics. Clean drinking water and soft drinks will be supplied at all meals and water will be available in the van.

Similarly, do not use ice unless you know it was made from filtered water. We recommend travelers only eat foods that have been cooked well. Fresh vegetables and fruits bear the risk of having been washed in contaminated water. Fruits you can peel are usually safe (i.e. bananas).

## Bathrooms

We recommend carrying toilet paper or tissues with you as some bathrooms, especially in more remote areas or restaurants, may not have any. Please also remember that in Uganda you should throw the toilet paper and any feminine hygiene products into the bin provided and not into the toilet itself, as this can cause problems with the delicate sewage system.

## Waste Disposal

To minimize your impact on the country you are visiting, please consider the following guidelines:

- Leave no trace — everything that you bring with you should go home with you.
- If you plan on shopping, make sure that you have extra room in your luggage or an extra bag to check on your way home (don't dump items to make room!)
- Avoid packing with plastic baggies and instead purchase reusable packing cubes, cloth bags, and reusable toiletry bags
- Bring a reusable water bottle that you can refill
- Remove packaging or tags of any newly purchased items before you go

## Local Cuisine & Drink

In Uganda, meat or chicken stews are served with *rica*, *chapatti*, *ugali*, or *matoke*. With Uganda's many lakes and rivers, fish are an important food. Local fish include the Nile perch, tiger fish, and the ngege tilapia. A favorite recipe serves tilapia with peanut sauce. Here are few famous dishes you may encounter:

- **Posho:** Stiff maize porridge (also known as *ugali* in other east African countries)
- **Matooke:** baked or steamed plantains
- **Katogo:** for breakfast, a mixture of banana stew with beans or meat
- **Nyama Choma:** Grilled meat (frequently goat), a big favorite across east Africa
- **Mandazi:** a type of doughnut
- **Rolex:** egg omelette & vegetables wrapped in a *chapati* (flatbread).

## Weather Conditions

The climate in Uganda is considered tropical and the country experiences two rainy seasons, which run from March-May and September-December. In Kampala, the daily high temperature is around 79°F, rarely falling below 75°F or exceeding 83°F. Daily low temperatures are around 63°F, rarely falling below 61°F or exceeding 66°F. Evenings tend to be cooler, especially in the mountains, so a lightweight jacket is recommended. Below is a chart that maps out the seasons and average rainfall and temperature of each month.

| Month     | Rainfall (in) | Temperature (F) | Season |
|-----------|---------------|-----------------|--------|
| January   | 1.8 in        | 75°F            | Dry    |
| February  | 1.8 in        | 76°F            | Dry    |
| March     | 4 in          | 76°F            | Wet    |
| April     | 6 in          | 75°F            | Wet    |
| May       | 5.5 in        | 74°F            | Wet    |
| June      | 3.6 in        | 73°F            | Dry    |
| July      | 3.6 in        | 72°F            | Dry    |
| August    | 4.8 in        | 73°F            | Dry    |
| September | 5 in          | 73°F            | Wet    |
| October   | 6.2 in        | 74°F            | Wet    |
| November  | 4.6 in        | 74°F            | Wet    |
| December  | 2.5 in        | 74°F            | Dry    |

## CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

Experiencing different cultures is one of the joys of traveling. Please take note of the information below to better understand and respect these cultural differences in Uganda.

- **Tipping:** Tipping is always appreciated, but not required. Feel free to leave a tip if you experienced exceptional service. Note that tips for guides, drivers, and restaurant staff at group meals have already been covered. If you are visiting Bwindi Impenetrable Forest for gorilla trekking, please make sure to bring at least \$125 USD with you to tip the guides, drivers porters, and other staff who are involved in the day's activities.
- **Bargaining/haggling:** Bargaining for curios & souvenirs at markets can be an enjoyable way to engage with some of the locals you will encounter on this trip. Prices in hotels, restaurants, and shops are generally fixed and bargaining is not required. Here are some bargaining tips:
  - Be prepared to take your time in reaching a deal. You need not feel obliged to buy something.

- Let the vendor share their asking price first. It will seem rushed for you to come right out asking the price of items, and lower your esteem as a good bargainer!
- Begin bargaining over an item you don't necessarily care for, and then move to the item you actually wanted as a "good-enough" alternative when the price for the first item is too much.
- Ask for another item or two to be thrown in. This way you can often find a really good deal and the vendor gets to move more goods.
- Bargaining may be the only chance the vendor gets to have social interaction during a long day at the market. Remember to have fun!

## Language

Luganda and English are the official languages in Uganda. Swahili is spoken by some in the northwest of the country and there are dozens of dialects spoken outside of the cities. Here are a few keywords and phrases in the local language to help you to better connect!:

| <i>English</i>  | <i>Luganda</i> |
|---|----------------|
| Hello   | Gyebale ko     |
| How are you?  | Oli otya?      |
| A universal greeting (roughly translates to "how are you?") | Chi kati       |
| Please  | Mwattu         |
| Thank you   | Weebale        |
| You're welcome  | Kale           |
| Yes   | Yes            |
| No  | Nedda          |
| Excuse me (to get someone's attention)                      | Owange         |
| Excuse me (I'm sorry)                                       | Nsonyiwa       |
| Nice to meet you  | Nsanyuse       |

## Local Customs & Culture

Here are a few "do's and don'ts" to help familiarize you with local customs & cultures:

- Formal greetings are fundamental to life in rural Africa. A few words of salutation followed by an inquiry after the other's health is the usual way to start a conversation. A handshake is done with the right hand. Even if you are just asking a quick question to a passer-by, it is polite to begin with a greeting and a warm smile.

- Showing anger while dealing with people is considered to be in poor taste, and is rarely helpful. Displaying certain emotions in public can be offensive to many Africans, particularly affection between members of the opposite sex.
- Holding hands publicly, embracing and especially kissing in public, is considered distasteful. Oddly enough, this does not apply to members of the same sex and it is not unusual to see men walking hand-in-hand with each other, although this has no homosexual connotation. Male travelers who get into a conversation or discussion with a male African may well find their hand being grasped and held onto for several minutes. This is a warm gesture that indicates acceptance, and is often an indication that the person is concerned that you accept the point they are trying to make.

## Photography

Uganda is a beautiful destination, and you will want to take lots of pictures. When photographing people, always ask permission first - this is a sign of respect. You can do this with gestures or ask your guide to translate. The only exception to this is when you are photographing a public scene with a lot of people in it, aiming at no one in particular. There are some places where photography is prohibited, and these areas are usually marked. If you are uncertain about whether or not photography is permitted, your guide will be there to advise you.

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## Human Trafficking in Travel

Elevate Destinations has signed *the Code of conduct for the protection of children from sexual exploitation in travel and tourism* and expects all of its partners to refuse involvement, both direct and indirect, in the commercial sexual exploitation of children. A “child” is defined as a person younger than 18 years of age, according to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

We encourage our travelers and suppliers to report the sexual exploitation of children. Information, even the smallest amount, can represent the missing piece of an ongoing investigation by law enforcement. If you are uncomfortable with leaving your name and contact information, you can report anonymously to law enforcement or NGOs. Report a concern [using this form](#); alternatively, you can email [protect@ecpat.net](mailto:protect@ecpat.net) to report sexual exploitation of children.

## Responsible Travel Tips

Elevate Destinations takes pride in its leadership in the field of responsible travel. We take care in selecting our local partners that share our environmental and social values and are avid supporters of locals working in the tourism industry as they are both the most impacted and impactful players at the local level. All of your ground costs on this trip are carbon offset using [SouthPole Flight's Carbon Calculator](#), and we encourage you to offset your international flights as well.

Here are a few tips that can help enrich your experience as a responsible traveler:

- **Keep an open mind:** Try to observe local customs and respect traditional cultures and people.
- **Language:** Learn a few basic greetings and “thank you” in the local language.
- **Local economy:** Support locally owned businesses, restaurants, and other services. Shop from local artisans to promote traditional crafts and encourage contemporary arts.
- **Respect:** It is important to acknowledge the privacy and dignity of others and ask before photographing or filming people. Ask permission before entering sacred places, homes or private land, and take heed of local customs (i.e. remove shoes, hats, cover hair with shawl, etc). Please ask your guide if you are unsure; they are there to support your introduction to the culture!
- **Community and environment:** Contribute to organizations that support traditional cultures and protect the natural environment. Keep to designated trails, and do not disturb plants and animals or their natural habitats.
- **Animal products:** Avoid purchasing crafts, clothing, furniture or other products that are derived from members of protected or endangered animal species.
- **Use alternatives to single-use plastics:** Avoid using plastic bags and try to minimize the use of other disposables. When traveling in areas away from cities, make sure to take out what you take in. Try using a reusable water bottle and treating your own drinking water when possible – check out what our friends at [Travelers Against Plastic](#) are doing!

### Smart Traveler Tip!

In travel, especially in remote parts of the world, things happen. Expect the unexpected! Keep an open mind, be flexible, and enjoy the moment. Sometimes the best memories come out of the unplanned.