



Uganda Country Guide

 elevate destinations

Welcome to Uganda!

In this document you will find information that will be useful during your journey to Uganda. The information listed in this guide includes cultural guidelines, communication tips, health and safety recommendations, and so much more. Please note that all information specific to your trip, such as inclusions and exclusions, staff contact numbers, flight information, etc. is listed in the WeTravel Trip Portal. For any questions unanswered by either the country guide or the WeTravel Trip Portal, please don't hesitate to reach out to an Elevate staff member.

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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.

Visa

Citizens from the United States are required to obtain a visa to travel to Uganda. [Click here](#) to apply for the visa. The Uganda Tourist Visa allows you to enter Uganda once and remain in the country for up to 90 days. An East African Tourist Visa allows you to enter Uganda, Rwanda, and/or Kenya and remain in any country for up to 90 days.

Note that if you are applying for the East African Tourist Visa, it is important that you apply through the country that you are arriving to first. For example, if your first port of entry is Rwanda, you may apply for the East African Tourist Visa upon arrival in Rwanda. If your first port of entry is Kenya, you must apply in advance [here](#).

Neither visa is available upon arrival, and we recommend applying for your visa as soon as you have booked your flights to Uganda and no later than one month prior to your departure.

To apply for a Uganda Tourist Visa or an East African Tourist Visa:

- Online Application – [click here](#)
- Have the following information and documents ready:
 - Copy of your passport
 - A recent passport size photo
 - Round-trip international flight itinerary
 - Hotel booking or reservation (find address on your Online Portal)
 - Yellow Fever Vaccination Certificate
 - USD \$50 (Uganda Visa) or \$100 (East African Visa) for the application fee
- Accommodation: Provide the name, address, and phone number of your hotel.
- Local contact (find details on the WeTravel Portal)
- ***Save your application ID upon submitting so that you can refer back to it to check the status of your application.**

The information provided on the application is screened by the Ugandan authorities after the form has been submitted and must be accurate and complete to avoid visa processing delays.

If you would like to acquire your visa for Uganda with a visa-processing center, Elevate Destinations recommends [A1 Passport & Visa Services](#) in Washington DC. For questions regarding the visa application, you can reach A1 Passport directly at (202) 639-1500.

Medical and Travel Insurance

Elevate Destinations will purchase emergency evacuation coverage for you. This policy covers emergency evacuations due to medical, political, or natural disasters for your trip dates. This policy also provides \$5,000 of emergency medical coverage. More details about this coverage can be found in the online trip portal.

This coverage does not include trip cancellation or interruption benefits and also does not cover pre or post-trip days of travel. We strongly suggest you purchase additional coverage to cover your non-refundable expenses in the event you need to cancel your trip or have additional expenses incurred on the trip.

Elevate strongly recommends purchasing additional travel and medical insurance and Cancel for Any Reason Coverage (CFAR). Cancel for Any Reason' (CFAR) coverage to cover trip related expenses. Please note that some CFAR insurance options are time-sensitive. Please be ready to purchase an insurance policy within 14 days of making your first trip payment.

Below are two insurance brokers that Elevate Destinations recommends.

- [USI Travel Insurance Services](#)
Email: info@travelinsure.com
Phone Number: (800) 937-1387
- Travel Insurance Center (Dan Drennen)
Email: dan@travelinsurancecenter.com
Phone Number: (402) 343-3621

Guests may acquire medical insurance through USI, The Travel Insurance Center, or any other insurance company of their choosing. Elevate Destinations is not equipped to answer specific questions on insurance. Please contact the insurance broker or company for specific information.

Smart Traveler Tip!

Have electronic and paper copies of your passport in case something happens to it while you are traveling.

- Scan a copy of your passport and email it to yourself.
- Take a photo of your passport and save it to your phone in an “Important Documents” photo album. Leave a scanned copy of your passport with friends and family at home.

Immunizations

You must be vaccinated against Yellow Fever and present a Yellow Fever Vaccine 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 or may not 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.
- c) Check that your medical insurance will cover you in Uganda or purchase a supplementary medical insurance policy that will.

Other Health Considerations

In general, we recommend a medium level of physical agility. For the most satisfying experience, and in fairness to your fellow travelers, please note that this trip requires participants to:

- Walk at least one mile without difficulty on uneven surfaces
- Spend extended periods of time on their feet
- Climb sets of stairs without assistance
- Keep pace with an active group of travelers
- Spend time outside in humid weather that can be hot in the day and cold at night
- Ride comfortably in a vehicle on bumpy roads for extended periods of time

- Flexible and positive attitude in the case of sudden changes to the itinerary or weather—expect the unexpected!

Medications

Always travel with medications in their original, clearly labeled containers and in your carry-on luggage. If carrying syringes or needles, be sure to have a physician's letter documenting their medical necessity and keep these handy when entering or exiting any of Uganda's borders.

Elevate Destinations also recommends that all travelers make and print a list of medications and any existing health conditions to bring on your trip. You may choose to carry this on your person or give it to your guide. Having this list could be life saving in the unlikely case of an emergency.

Safety Recommendations

Your guide will give you current briefings on safety while in-country, but here are some basic ground rules for safety while traveling:

- If you have time sensitive medication including epi-pens and inhalers, keep them on you at all times.
- Keep all valuables in the hotel safe.
- Avoid flashing money. Be mindful of your belongings at all times. Keep bags in front of you in crowds and on your lap when at restaurants.
- Pay attention and 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.
- We encourage you to [register with STEP](#) (see below).

Smart Traveler Tip!

We recommend that all travelers from the USA sign-up for the State Department's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)! 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.

Communications

Wi-Fi: Wi-Fi is available in your hotel(s), 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.

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

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

1. **Smartphone apps:** WhatsApp is the most widely used app for communicating (works on both Wi-Fi and cellular). Remember to download the app *before* you travel!
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:** This is a good option for making calls within Uganda as international calls can get expensive. Local SIM cards are inexpensive, can be found at a variety of stores, and often have pay-as-you-go plans where you can “top up” your credit for use in the country. 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). This will change your phone number for the duration of time you have a foreign SIM card in your phone.

Essential Travel Documents

In case of emergency, it is advisable to record all of your important information on one sheet of paper, photocopy it, and distribute a few copies in your luggage and among relatives or friends at home. Also email a scanned copy to yourself. Take a photo of these documents and save them in an “important travel document” photo folder on your phone so that you can access these documents electronically.

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

- Passport - original and photocopy
- Visa photocopy
- Yellow Fever vaccination certificate
- International flight itinerary or e-tickets
- Address and phone numbers of the hotels where you are staying
- Medical/travel insurance policy details and 24-hour emergency number
- Evacuation insurance ID card (provided to you by Elevate Destinations)
- Emergency Contact List (provided to you by Elevate Destinations)
- Contact information of relatives/friends and your primary care physician to be contacted in an emergency
- List of current medical needs and medications in case of an emergency

Money

USD is widely accepted in Uganda, especially in cities like Kampala. However, In rural areas or for smaller businesses, local currency may be the preferred option. The local currency in Uganda is the Ugandan Shilling (UGX). Click [here](#) to see the current exchange rate. The Ugandan Shilling comes in the following denominations:

- **Bank Notes:** 50, 100, 200, 500, 1,000, 2,000, 5,000, 10,000, 20,000, and 50,000 UGX

The small amount of local currency you may need during your stay in Uganda can be obtained at authorized facilities (such as ATMS, hotels, banks and foreign exchange bureaus). In general, we suggest that you limit the amount of money you convert into local currencies and exchange only what you think you will spend before leaving any foreign country. Save all receipts from your currency exchange transactions. If you plan to exchange USD cash, the bills must be:

- New (no older than 2009). Bills printed before 2009 will not be accepted.
- In pristine condition (no rips, tears, smudges, markings, creases, etc)
- Larger denominations (\$50 and \$100 bills attract the best exchange rate)

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

ATM/Debit Cards: You can use your debit card to withdraw money from ATMs.

Note: We recommend traveling with 1-3 crisp \$100 bills in your carry-on luggage to exchange in the case that ATMs are not working for you.

Change: Ask for smaller bills when you change money, or use your large bills at large shops to receive more change. In many cases, people (local vendors especially) don't have change.

Credit Cards: Visa credit cards are the most widely accepted card in larger establishments, while at some smaller, local restaurants, shops or markets, merchants may only accept cash. Most merchants will charge an additional 2-5% of the bill for a credit card transaction. Please note MasterCard is occasionally accepted and American Express and Discover cards are not commonly accepted.

Cash: It is generally recommended to carry cash when traveling outside urban areas or on safari, as smaller businesses and rural areas may not accept cards.

Gratuities: Please check your online trip portal to find which gratuities are and are not covered in your trip cost. We recommend tipping your porters at the hotels and leaving behind cash in your room for the cleaning staff. For porters, \$1 USD per bag is appropriate. For cleaning staff, we recommend leaving behind \$3-5 per day.

Smart Traveler Tip!

Be sure you remember your ATM PIN numbers to withdraw cash at your destination.

Most banks and credit card companies do not flag international use as unusual, but if you use a more local bank it would be wise to notify them of your travel plans.

In-country Info

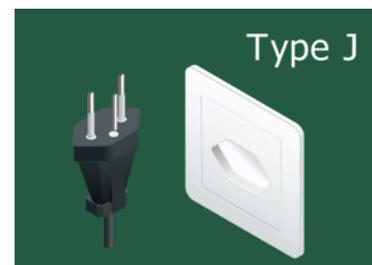
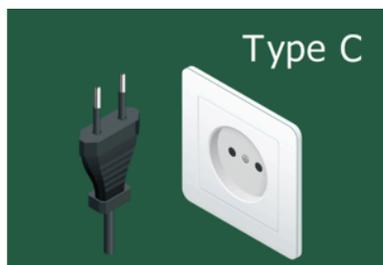
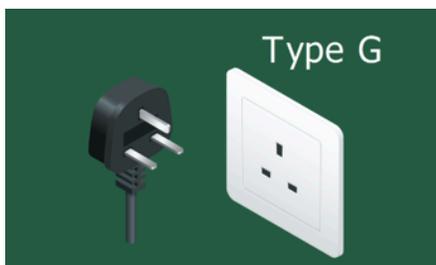
Time

Uganda follows East Africa Time, which is UTC+3.

- Uganda is 8 hours ahead of Eastern Time (ET) during Standard Time and 7 hours ahead during Daylight Saving Time.
- Uganda is 11 hours ahead of Pacific Time (PT) during Standard Time and 10 hours ahead during Daylight Saving Time.

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.



Smart Traveler Tip!

Download a conversion app, such as [Units Plus](#), for things like currency, temperature, time, and distance while traveling.

Water & Food Safety

Tap water is *not* safe to drink in Uganda. Do not drink tap water or use it to brush your teeth; only use purified water. Only use ice at your hotels and/or restaurants where you know it was made from purified water.

Elevate Destinations encourages travelers to pack a reusable water bottle to fill up with clean drinking water. Clean drinking water and soft drinks will be supplied at all meals and water will be available in the van.

Similarly, we recommend travelers 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). Uganda has wonderfully fresh foods and the markets are a great place to try many of the delicious dishes that the country has to offer. Just follow your guide's lead about where and what is safe to eat. Use caution, and when in doubt, ask your guide or skip it.

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

Keep in mind that much of the world's waste disposal systems are not as advanced as you might be used to. Oftentimes, landfills are adjacent to conservation land or trash is burned. Recycling is often unavailable. To minimize your impact, 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 bags 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 in Uganda before you go

Local Cuisine

In Uganda, meat or chicken stews are served with *rica*, *chapati*, *ugali*, or *matoke*. With Uganda's many lakes and rivers, freshwater fish are often served. Local fish include the Nile perch, tiger fish, and the ngege tilapia. A popular recipe is tilapia with peanut sauce.

Here are some common Ugandan dishes that you may try during your trip:

- **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
- **Rolax:** Egg omelet & 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, average rainfall, and temperature of each month.

Month	Rainfall (in)	Temperature (F)	Season
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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 and ways of life is one of the joys of traveling. Below are some major elements of daily life, culture, and customs in Uganda that you may experience.

- **Demographics:** The majority of the Ugandan population identifies as Christian and are indigenous to Uganda. Other notable populations include Indians, the vast majority of whom live in Kampala, and refugees from South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo.
- **LGBTQ+ Rights:** LGBTQ+ people are affected by laws and policies around the world. In Uganda, consensual same-sex sexual acts continue to be criminalized, and there are legal barriers to freedom and expression in place. For more information on LGBTQ+ rights and tools for LGBTQ+ travelers going to Uganda, [click here](#).
- **Greetings:** Formal greetings are fundamental to life in rural Africa. A few words of salutation followed by an inquiry about 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.
- **Public Emotions:**

- 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.
- **Scams:** It is good practice to look out for scams while traveling, especially around tourist areas and big cities. It's pretty easy to avoid if you know what to look out for. Be vigilant. Here are some tips to avoid theft and scams:
 - When riding in a *tuk tuk* or motorbike, keep all personal belongings very close to you, preferably attached to your body in some way.
 - When walking, always wear your backpack in front. Wear your purse slung across your body and place your hand over the zipper area in front as you walk.
 - If at the beach, always have a friend watch your belongings if you go for a swim.
 - Carry a photocopy of your passport with you at all times. If a police officer (or anyone, for that matter) asks to see it, say that your passport is at the consulate and offer to give them the photocopy instead. Police sometimes try to bribe tourists by taking their passport and demanding money to give it back.

Language

English and Swahili are the official languages in Uganda. Luganda is spoken in Kampala and across the Central and South Eastern regions of the country, and there are dozens of dialects spoken outside of the cities. We recommend practicing the below phrases. People will appreciate you attempting to speak in their language!

English	Luganda
Hello	Gyebale ko
How are you?	Oli otya?
A universal greeting (roughly translates to "how are you?")	<i>Chi kati</i>
Please	<i>Mwattu</i>
Thank you	<i>Weebale</i>

You're welcome	<i>Kale</i>
Yes	Yes
No	<i>Nedda</i>

Photography

Uganda is a beautiful country, and you will want to take lots of pictures. When photographing people, always ask permission first. This is a sign of respect, as the subjects of your photos have the autonomy to consent. You can do this with gestures or ask your guide to translate.

Always be considerate of anyone's desire not to be photographed. There are some places where photography is prohibited; these areas are usually marked. If you are uncertain about whether or not photography is permitted, your guide will be there to advise you.

If you would like some tips on ethical photography practices, check out our blog post, "[Nine questions to help decolonize your photography](#)."

Human Trafficking in Travel

Elevate Destinations has signed [The Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism](#) (The Code) 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 to report sexual exploitation of children.

Read about Elevate's values & vision, our [sustainability commitment](#), our programs that give back and more on our website at www.elevatedestinations.com. Our team members are always excited to share more on this topic. We acknowledge that to maintain truly sustainable travel products takes ongoing commitment. We continue to monitor our programs on the ground in order to improve them, and welcome your thoughts, feedback and encouragement!

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 [Native Energy's Carbon Calculator](#).

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

- **Keep an open mind:** 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.
- **Pay a fair price:** Bargaining is acceptable on this trip and a great way to engage with locals. Try to have fun and not be overly aggressive in bargaining for souvenirs.
- **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.
- **Properly dispose of trash:** 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!
- **Don't feel pressured to give away money or material items:** You will likely encounter instances of poverty and people asking for donations. We try to discourage giving away money or items as it can actually accentuate an unequal relationship between visitors and locals. Additionally, children that receive money, gifts and sweets from you are encouraged to stick around for more rather than to be in school. As difficult as it can be to turn down direct requests, sometimes giving your friendship and respect to locals can

be the best gift of all. If you want to help, consider giving to a trustworthy charity, non-profit, or local school.

- **Tip your housekeeping staff:** Many of the staff cleaning hotel rooms are on the bottom of the economic pyramid. Please consider leaving a tip before you check out. The equivalent of \$3-5 a day is appropriate. This is an easy way to ensure some of your money reaches the hands that need it the most.

Smart Traveler Tip!

In travel, especially in the developing 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.