



SANCTUARY
RETREATS

Your holiday guide to

UGANDA



CONTENTS

UGANDA HOLIDAY GUIDE



- UGANDA 04
- GETTING INTO UGANDA 06
- STAYING HEALTHY 06
- TIME ZONE 06
- TIPPING 07
- TALK THE TALK 07
- MONEY 07
- WEATHER 08
- WHAT TO PACK 08
- PHOTOGRAPHY 09
- BAGGAGE RESTRICTIONS 09
- LOCAL FOOD AND DRINK 09



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UGANDA

UGANDA

Still one of the world's best kept natural secrets, Uganda receives far less visitors than its neighbouring countries. Characterised by dramatic scenery throughout, it is home to deep lakes, stunning waterfalls, towering mountains and incredible wildlife.

Uganda also has the highest concentration of primates on earth, including the mountain gorilla – now one of the rarest animals on the planet. There are just over 1000 mountain gorillas in the world and over 400 of them reside in Uganda – mainly found in the epic Bwindi Impenetrable Forest.

Gorilla trekking is offered in Bwindi Impenetrable Forest and Chimpanzee trekking is available in Kibale National Park.

National Parks and Principal Sights

Most of Uganda's environment is divided into protected areas, taken care of by the Uganda Wildlife Authority and the National Forest Authority. Uganda has ten national parks and almost a third of the country is covered by water. Lake Victoria, the largest in Africa, dominates the south while Lakes Edward and Albert lie to the west.

BWINDI IMPENETRABLE FOREST

Bwindi Impenetrable Forest is a UNESCO World Heritage site situated in the southwest corner of Uganda. The park is 331 square kilometres and impresses with a truly theatrical landscape and bio-diversity – this is a region of volcanoes, jagged valleys, waterfalls, lakes and dramatic mountain ranges. Birders come thousands of miles to see the more than 350 species that live within the area.

There are also rare forest elephant, giant forest hog and eleven kinds of primates, including red tailed and blue monkey, black and white colobus, baboons and chimpanzee. You can also find forest duiker antelopes and bush buck antelopes, as well as over 200 species of butterflies.

GORILLA TRACKING

Bwindi is home to 400 mountain gorillas, just under half the world's population of this critically endangered ape. The gorillas are completely wild but have become used to seeing a few humans after years of habituation. Many of the expert guides have been involved in this process since the beginning, and are able to explain the complicated etiquette involved in meeting a giant silverback. This is an opportunity afforded only to a select few, as just eight visitors are allowed to view each group every day.

There are currently nine habituated mountain gorilla groups open to tourism:

- Mubare, Habinyanja and Rushegura near Buhoma
- Bitukura and Oruzogho near Ruhija
- Nkuringo, Mishaya, Nshongi and Kahugye in Bwindi South.

Tracking through dense forest with steep slopes means that participants do need to be physically fit. Once the gorillas are located, you spend a maximum of one hour with them before returning back to camp. Please note only children aged 15 and above can track gorilla. Guests taking part in this activity must have a permit.

GORILLA TRACKING PERMIT

Permits must be purchased in advance. Permits are sold for a specific person for a specific day, and currently cost US\$600 each (subject to change.) To reserve a permit, a deposit is required. As a company, Sanctuary Gorilla Forest Camp is able to invoice for the entire permit price at once to save on the very high bank fees that are charged in Uganda on incoming foreign currency payments.



GETTING INTO UGANDA

Visa Information

Foreign visitors may be required to obtain a visa to enter Uganda.

Before travelling to Uganda, please contact the Ugandan Embassy in your country for the most up to date visa information.

Travellers should check for visa requirements pertaining to their citizenship, as entry requirements vary between countries.

All travellers, however, must be in possession of a passport with at least six months of validity left beyond the intended departure date from Uganda.

Please visit <http://www.uganda.visahq.com> for a full list of nationalities which require visas for entry into Uganda.



STAYING HEALTHY

For up to date information on the latest health and vaccination recommendations, please consult with a qualified health professional at least 6 weeks before your intended departure. Anti-malarial medication is strongly recommended for all visitors to Uganda.

If you are arriving (or planning to re-enter) from a country where yellow fever is endemic, then you are required to have a yellow fever vaccination. This vaccination is also recommended if you are travelling outside of urban areas. It is recommended that all international travellers ensure that their tetanus, Hepatitis A, and polio vaccines are up-to-date. Do not drink (or brush your teeth with) the tap water.

TIME ZONE

Uganda standard time is GMT + 3 hours

TIPPING

You are travelling on an independent itinerary and the cost of your program does not include gratuities. Tipping is a very personal matter and should only be considered when our staff have gone above and beyond for you. Should you feel you would like to acknowledge their service, the below serves as a rough guide. The customary gratuity is about 10% of the cost of the service. An amount equivalent to the below scale is in US dollars, per person per day.

Driver-guide in Bwindi:

- A tip of about US\$10 per transfer is appropriate for your transfer driver.

Porter on a Gorilla Track

- If you choose to take a porter (highly recommended), the minimum recommended tip is US\$15 per traveller per track.

Guides (usually 1 per group), Trackers (usually 2-3 per group) & Security personnel (usually 2-4 per group)

- These staff do earn salaries. A recommended tip of about US\$20 per day of tracking per traveller may be placed in the appropriate tip box for your gorilla group (found at Park Headquarters) for distribution amongst the staff.



MONEY

The Ugandan shilling is issued in denominations of 1000, 5000, 10000, 20000 and 50000 shillings for notes, while coins are issued in denominations of 10, 50, 100, 200 and 500 shillings. The local currency can be obtained at authorised facilities (such as banks and foreign exchange bureaus). Foreign currency can also be changed at the airport on arrival. Many establishments will only change USD issued after the year 2000. Be aware that only paper currency will normally be accepted for exchange.

In Uganda, credit card use is usually restricted to major banks and hotels; most shops will not accept other methods of payment other than cash. Sanctuary Gorilla Forest Camp accepts Visa, MasterCard, Amex and JCB credit cards. Travellers cheques are not widely accepted outside of Kampla.



TALK THE TALK

English is the official national language. Luganda, the most common of the many indigenous languages, is also widely spoken.

Useful phrases

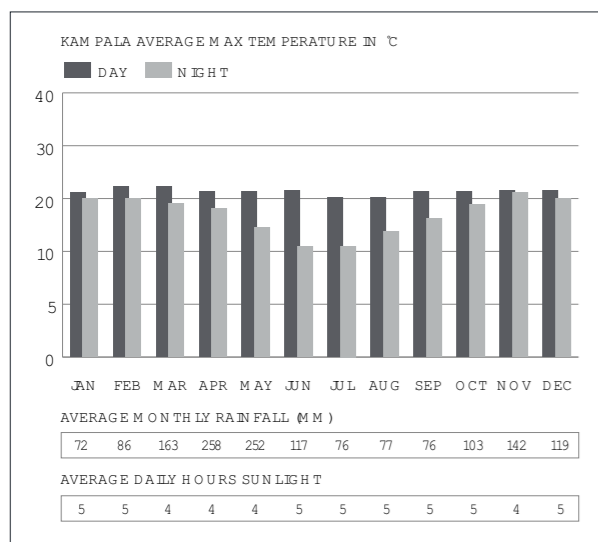
<i>Hello</i>	<i>Agandi</i>
<i>How are you?</i>	<i>Agandi</i>
<i>I am fine</i>	<i>Ndyaho</i>
<i>I am not fine</i>	<i>Ntidigye</i>
<i>Thank you</i>	<i>Yebare Munonga</i>
<i>Beautiful</i>	<i>Ebyokushemeza</i>
<i>Goodbye</i>	<i>Ogume Gye</i>





WEATHER

In Uganda days are warm, but it almost invariably rains, except in the very driest months of January and February. It can get very cool at night. The year-round weather stays within this range.



WHAT TO PACK

For the Gorilla Track:

- It often rains heavily, even in the dry season, so a light raincoat will be useful.
- Sturdy walking boots with good ankle support and grip are also recommended.
- A light shoulder bag or small rucksack is useful to carry your packed lunch, water bottles, raincoat, camera and other essentials. Local porters are also available.
- Strong gloves are of enormous help, as you will be hauling yourself uphill by grabbing the bushes, and often sliding downhill on the seat of your pants
- During the track, wearing a pair of walking trousers or gaiters will prevent cuts and scratches.
- Carry a water-proof plastic bag to wrap your camera and film or memory cards in.
- Flash photography is strictly prohibited as this may upset the gorillas. Make sure you bring ample supplies of high-speed film (400 ASA minimum or 800 ASA recommended) or memory cards to counter this. Also make sure you are completely familiar with the workings of your camera before you observe the gorillas.

For the Camp:

- Evening dress is 'smart casual', there is no formal wear required.
- We advise guests to dress in a way they feel most comfortable.
- The altitude at Bwindi is just over a mile high. Evenings can get chilly, so it is advisable to carry a sweater. For the daytime, light clothes usually suffice.
- We offer a complimentary overnight laundry service in Sanctuary Gorilla Forest Camp.



LOCAL FOOD & DRINK

Ugandan cuisine consists of traditional and modern cooking styles, practices, foods and dishes in Uganda, with English, Arab, Asian and 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.

Most tribes in Uganda have their own speciality dish or delicacy. Many dishes include various vegetables, potatoes, yams, bananas and other tropical fruits. 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, meats are consumed less than in other areas. Nyama is the Swahili word for "meat".

Main dishes are usually centered on a sauce or stew of groundnuts, beans or meat. The starch traditionally comes from ugali (maize meal) or matooke (boiled and mashed green banana), in the South, or an ugali made from millet in the North. Ugali is cooked up into a thick porridge for breakfast.

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. Fruits such as bananas and pineapples are plentiful and commonly consumed: cooked in foods, eaten as snacks or as a dessert.

Groundnuts: peanuts are a vital staple and groundnut sauce is probably the most commonly eaten one. They are eaten plain or mixed with smoked fish, smoked meat or mushrooms.

Tea (chai) and coffee (kawa) are popular beverages and important cash crops. These can be served English-style or spiced (chai masala). Both traditional and Western beers are probably the most widely available alcoholic beverages across Uganda.

Our lodges and camps serve a variety of fresh produce and traditional western cuisine. Local beers and a wide selection of wines are also available. With prior notice, our camps are able to arrange halaal meals, however, please note our kitchens aren't strictly halaal and our chefs are not trained in halaal food preparation. Unfortunately, we are unable to arrange kosher meals.

BAGGAGE RESTRICTIONS

Maximum of 15 kg / 33lbs of luggage per person in soft-sided bags are allowed for light aircraft flights, including hand luggage and camera equipment. It is highly recommended that checked luggage is locked. Please do not pack valuable items in checked luggage.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Flash photography is prohibited when tracking gorillas. We recommend that you bring all the photographic equipment you will need from home, including an ample supply of film, additional memory cards and rechargeable batteries. Many travellers, viewing this as their "trip of a lifetime" for animal photography, bring more than one camera in case of a malfunction. Sun filters will help block glare and heat haze. A dustproof camera bag and an air brush will help protect your equipment from heavy dust. If you plan to travel with digital photographic and/or video equipment, make certain to pack the specific charging apparatus for each piece of equipment (as well as the appropriate socket plug adaptor and voltage converter if required). When photographing people, especially members of the local tribes, always ask permission first. Because so many local people are asked for permission to be photographed, many will expect a tip or an outright fee for this. Always be considerate of anyone's desire not to be photographed. There are some places where photography is prohibited, and these areas are usually clearly marked.