

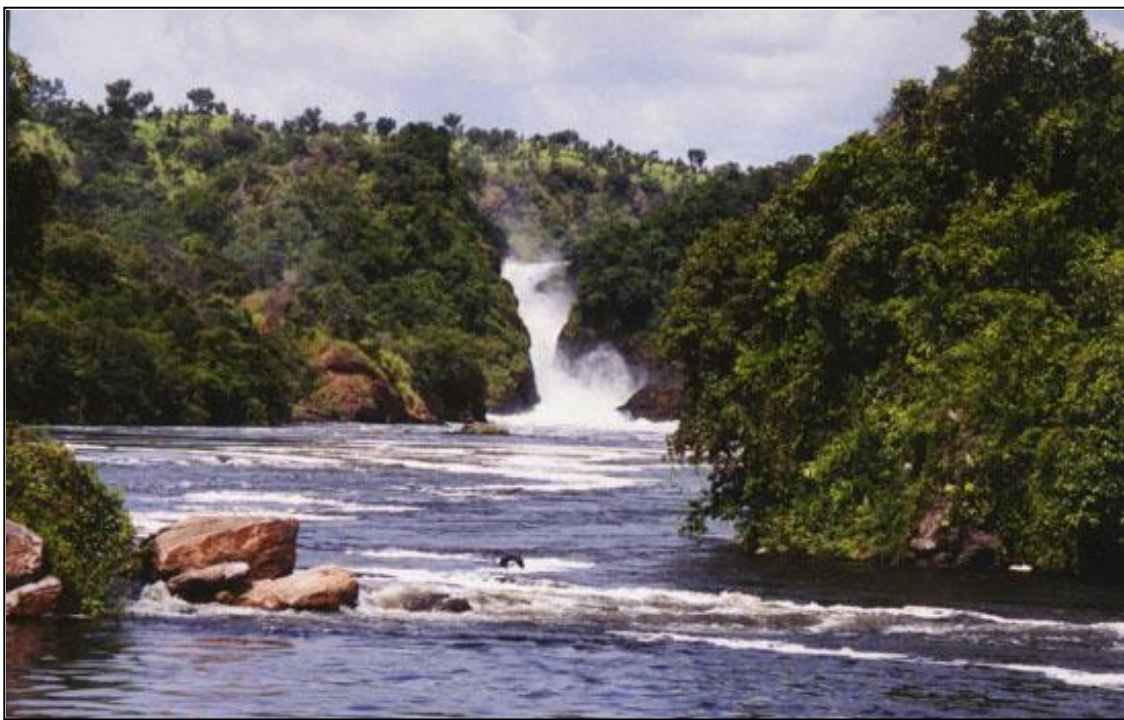
# BIG FIVE<sup>®</sup>

TOURS & EXPEDITIONS

*Enriching Lives Through Distinctive Journeys*

## Destination Information Guide

# Uganda



*The following general outline offers practical information, suggestions and answers to some frequently asked questions. It is not intended to be the definitive guide for your trip.*

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## Welcome to the World of Big Five!

Big Five Tours & Expeditions is pleased to welcome you on this exciting adventure. We take great care to insure that your travel dreams and expectations are well met. Our distinctive journeys allow you to experience the finest aspects each destination has to offer. We also aim to provide you with a deeper understanding of and appreciation for the places you'll visit and the people you'll meet.



**Entebbe, Uganda**      Elevation: 3789 feet      Latitude: 00 01N      Longitude: 032 27E

**Average High Temperature**      Years on Record: 49

YEAR	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	
°F	77	78	78	78	77	77	75	75	75	77	78	78	78

**Average Low Temperature**      Years on Record: 49

YEAR	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
°F	60	62	62	64	62	62	60	60	60	62	62	62

**Average Precipitation**      Years on Record: 96

YEAR	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	
in	60.6	2.8	3.4	6.4	10.1	9.9	4.6	3	3	3	4.1	5.6	4.7

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## WEATHER

The temperature, usually ranging between 69°F and 77°F, can be quite cool in some parts of the country 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 Mid September and November.

## TIME ZONES

Uganda is GMT + 3 hours.

## PASSPORTS & VISAS

**Passports:** For international travel, a U.S. passport valid for at least six months from date of departure, containing **at least** two blank pages is necessary.

**Visas:** Many countries require that travelers obtain visas prior to arrival. Big Five Tours & Expeditions has appointed Zierer Visa Service ([www.ZVS.com](http://www.ZVS.com)) to process required visas for our passengers. The Visa Application Kit is included with your pre-trip confirmation packet.

You can also download the necessary forms from the website, where you will enter the visa section for Big Five Tours & Expeditions. Here you will find a list of country-specific forms. You will also discover useful hints such as how to obtain a passport, adding passport pages, and other tips.

**Important:** Please look at your passport before you submit it to ZVS to insure that:

- 1) Your passport is valid for at least six months after the date of travel.
- 2) You have sufficient blank pages for visa stamps that will be added as you travel in and out of various countries.

**Please note:** Pages reserved for amendments and endorsements cannot be used for visas.

## AIRPORT FORMALITIES

Upon arrival, proceed through immigration and baggage claims and customs. Big Five personnel or their representatives will assist you with your baggage, escort you to your hotel, and assist with check-in.

## UGANDA CUSTOMS

**Duty-Free Items:** The following items may be imported into Uganda by visitors over 17 years without incurring customs duty (except from Kenya and Tanzania): 200 cigarettes or 225g of tobacco or a combination thereof; one bottle of spirits or wine; 568ml of perfume.

**Restricted exports:** A special permit is required to export game trophies.

## U.S. CUSTOMS

Returning U.S. residents are allowed to bring back \$800 worth of merchandise duty-free. There are limits on some items. Regulations frequently change. For a list of exempt items and more information contact your nearest Customs office or write the U.S. Customs Service, Box 7407, Washington, DC 20044.

## HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

Visitors to Africa should be in generally good health. For Uganda and Rwanda, travelers should be good shape to participate in the trekking and animal tracking of these programs.

Talk with your personal physician about any shots or boosters recommended depending on your personal health profile and your itinerary. Tetanus and polio vaccines should be up to date.

**Yellow Fever:** As of this writing, a Yellow Fever inoculation **is required** by the Ugandan government to enter the country.

**Malaria:** Malaria risk, predominantly in the malignant *falciparum* form, occurs all year throughout the country, including the main towns of Fort Portal, Jinja, Kampala, Mbale and parts of Kigezi. Resistance to chloroquine and sulfadoxine-pyrimethamine has been reported. The recommended prophylaxis is mefloquine. **We strongly recommend that you consult your physician regarding these matters.** It is highly

recommended that you obtain a prescription for a malaria precaution. The best protection against malaria is to avoid being bitten by a mosquito. Wear long-sleeved shirts and pants in the evening hours. Take a good insect repellent and apply to all exposed skin.

**Rabies** is present. For those at high risk, vaccination before arrival should be considered. If you are bitten, seek medical advice without delay.

**Other risks:** *Bilharzia* (schistosomiasis) is present. Avoid swimming and paddling in fresh water; swimming pools which are well chlorinated and maintained are safe. Meningitis risk exists, depending on area visited and time of year. *Hepatitis A, B and E*, and *tuberculosis* occur. Sleeping sickness (*trypanosomiasis*) is reported. *HIV/AIDS* is widespread.

**Medical Treatment:** There are medical facilities of a reasonable standard only in large towns and cities.

**Please note:** If you are on medication, be sure to bring enough for the duration of the trip. Prescription medicines should always be carried in their original containers in your hand luggage. Visitors should but inquire first at the Embassy or High Commission whether such supplies may be freely imported.

**Health insurance is strongly advised during any foreign travel.**

**For more information,** please check the latest regulations with your local health office or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747); fax: 1-888-CDC-FAXX (1-888-232-3299), or their main telephone number in Atlanta, 404-332-4559. Or, visit the CDC Internet home page at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

## CLOTHING

*For general clothing information, please review the **Travel Handbook** in your pre-departure materials. See pre-departure information for general packing check list.*

Daytime temperatures in Uganda are generally warm to hot, so bring lightweight clothing and rainwear. Evenings are cooler, especially at high altitudes, so carry a couple of sweaters or warm wraps for the evenings. *Please note that Ugandans appreciate conservative dress.*

**Equipment for Gorilla Tracking:** Warm clothes, fleece or light wool sweater, moisture wicking undergarments, lightweight wool socks, long-sleeved shirt, strong waterproof walking boots (comfortable for going up and down steep hills), sturdy trousers, sunglasses, a torch, fast film, binoculars, sun screen, a sun hat, a breathable lightweight rain poncho or parka with a rain hat, gloves to grip vegetation (inexpensive gardening gloves work well) and a small backpack to carry water and a packed lunch. It is best to have layers of clothing as temperatures tend to change. The guides will make you a walking stick if needed.

## LUGGAGE

*For general baggage information, please review the **Travel Handbook** in your pre-departure materials.*

**On safari,** luggage should be limited to two items of baggage per person.

## FOR INTERNAL FLIGHTS

Flights within the country may have weight restrictions that can vary from 27 lbs to 44 lbs, depending on several factors, including type and size of aircraft, destination, etc. Specific weight limitations will be advised and noted in your pre-departure information and final itinerary.

## MONEY

**Currency:** Uganda Shilling (UGX). Notes are in denominations of UGX10,000, 5,000 and 1,000. Coins are in denominations of UGX500, 200, 100 and 50.

**Currency exchange:** Foreign currency may be exchanged at the Central Bank, commercial banks and foreign exchange bureau.

**Credit & debit cards:** American Express, Diners, MasterCard and Visa are accepted are accepted by very few outlets in Kampala and Kigali and a few hotels/lodges up-country. Check with your credit or debit card company for details of merchant

acceptability and other services which may be available.

**Travelers checks:** To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travelers are advised to take travelers checks in US Dollars or Pounds Sterling. It is advised that travelers bring sufficient US dollars in cash in case of emergencies.

**Currency restrictions:** The import and export of local currency is prohibited. Free import of foreign currency is declared on arrival. Export of foreign currency is unlimited, up to the amount declared on arrival. It is imperative to obtain a currency declaration form on arrival in Uganda. Unspent shillings can be reconverted to foreign currency.

**Note:** Please be aware that high denomination US Dollar bills (only post-2000) are usable. Bills should be in excellent condition with no stains or tears. Most places still accept only cash. ATM machines are available in Kampala and Kigali only.

## COMMUNICATION

English is the official language. Luganda and Swahili are widely spoken. There are more than 30 different indigenous languages.

## ELECTRICITY

Uganda: 240 volts. 3-pin (square) sockets. Most camps/lodges, even if they do not have power, can make arrangements for recharging batteries. Converters and adapters may not work efficiently, so battery-operated appliances are best. Power failures occur and generators are frequently turned off during the night, so it's wise to have a small flashlight.

## FOOD & DRINK

All water should be regarded as a potential health risk. Water used for drinking, brushing teeth, cleaning contacts or making ice should have first been boiled or otherwise sterilized. Make sure bottled water is sealed when you get it. Milk is unpasteurized and should be boiled or avoided. Powdered or tinned milk is available and is advised, but make sure that it is reconstituted with pure water. Avoid dairy products which are likely to have been made from unboiled milk.

Only eat well-cooked meat and fish, preferably served hot. Pork, salad and mayonnaise may carry increased risk. Vegetables should be cooked and fruit peeled.

Please note that water is a precious commodity in most areas of the world, and you will most likely be charged extra for bottled water.

**Note:** If you have food allergies or special/restricted dietary requests, please notify your travel agent or our office in advance, so that we may try to comply with your needs. Also, please advise your travel agent or our office if you have any mobility restrictions, so that we may inform our representatives accordingly. They will always strive to accommodate you to the best of their ability

## TIPPING

**Gratuities:** There are no set percentages for tips. Local culture believes the level of tips should be at the discretion of the client and any token of appreciation is gladly received.

These are our suggestions:

- About 3-5% in restaurants;
- At lodges/camps - US\$ \$3-5 per guest for a stay of 1-3 days;
- For driver/guides - US\$ \$5-10 per day per client;
- For the Head gorilla tracking ranger - \$10 per day per client;
- Porters at parks - \$3 per day per person.
- Hotel/lodge baggage porters - \$1-\$2 per client per stay.
- Forest walks guides - \$3 per client.

Tips to drivers/guides and trackers are not usually included in your tour program, and is left up to the discretion of the client. Tipping is normally done at the end of the tour.

## SHOPPING

You will have opportunities to shop in local markets for a variety of hand-made items including bangles, necklaces and bracelets, woodcarvings, basketry, tea, coffee and ceramics.

## WHILE ON SAFARI...

*See pre-departure materials for general safety issues.*

## Gorilla Tracking

See *Gorilla Tracking Supplement* for more information.

Please be aware that obtaining one of the scarce gorilla-tracking permits does **not** a guarantee that you will see gorillas. To protect gorillas from disease, no children under 15 or people with illnesses may go tracking. While gorilla trekking, please remember that the animals you encounter are wild! Follow established guidelines.

**Travelers must be fit and in good health as tracking in thick forest at altitudes up to 9,800 feet, and traversing steep-sided mountains and ravines can be tough, arduous and wet.** Porters can be hired to carry equipment. Part of the gorilla permit fee goes to communities living around the gorilla parks. Permits are non-refundable.

It is important to note that gorilla viewing can be denied at short notice because of national park or border closures, security changes or gorillas going out of range. In such circumstances refunds are at the discretion of the authority and are not within our control.

Visitors are allowed to spend one hour with the gorillas, at a distance of at least 16 feet. **Flash photography is not allowed, so fast film is useful (400-1600 ASA).** Personal video recorders are allowed. Professional film makers require permission and need to purchase filming permits. At the National Parks, you will meet your ranger who will explain the rules for tracking gorillas and will take you up to the gorillas. Please follow the rules stated.

National park regulations govern the behavior of visitors. This is for your safety as well as the safety of the animals. Be considerate of the habitat, speak softly while near animals, and don't make sudden moves or wave to try to attract attention.

Pamphlets addressing general safety issues abroad are available from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402, or at Bureau of Consular Affairs' home page:  
<http://travel.state.gov>.

## UGANDA – AN INTRODUCTION

By African standards, Uganda is a postage stamp-size country, at the heart of the continent, sandwiched between Kenya, Rwanda, Congo, Sudan and Tanzania. It is roughly the size of Oregon. Uganda's most alluring features are its forests, lakes and mountains. Most of the country is 3,281 feet above sea level. Three mountainous areas dominate: the Rwenzoris, Mount Elgon and the Virunga volcanoes. Wildlife has steadily increased and many species of game can be seen. Game viewing is free of the mass tourism in some countries. Primates, especially the mountain gorilla and chimpanzees, are a special attraction together with over a thousand species of birds.

Most of Uganda is well-watered and fertile. Although it lies on the Equator, the climate is tempered by its altitude. The famed Nile River starts its long journey to the Mediterranean from Lake Victoria, the largest lake in Africa, and traverses Murchison Falls National Park.

The population is about twenty four million, largely Christian, but with sizeable Muslim and Animist communities. The central area is largely Bantu-speaking with the Baganda as the largest group. The Northern tribes are Nilotic in origin; the north is also the home of the nomadic Karamajong and the remote mountain tribe - the Ik. There are pygmy communities (the Batwa) in some forest areas. More than 30 languages are spoken - with English, Luganda and Swahili being the most widely used.

Lord Lugard established a British East African Company base in 1890 in Kampala and shortly afterwards Uganda became a British Protectorate, centered around four old African Kingdoms. The Uganda Railway linking the interior to the coast reached Kisumu (in Kenya) on Lake Victoria in 1901 and Kampala in 1915. The system of indirect rule gave Uganda greater autonomy than elsewhere in British-ruled Africa. At independence in 1962, Uganda was a prosperous and peaceful country. It went through a turbulent period after Amin seized control in 1971. In 1986, the National Resistance Movement, lead by Yoweri Museveni, took control of the country. The old kingdoms, abolished in the 1960s, were restored in 1993 and the

monarchs have now re-emerged as symbols of traditional society. The 36th Kabaka of the Baganda, Ronald Mutebi, was crowned in 1993.

## **SUGGESTED READING LIST**

Many comprehensive and readily available guides produced by Lonely Planet, Fodor, Insight, The Rough Guide, etc., many books relating to this destination. Here are a few selections we thought might interest you. Longitude Books at <http://www.longitudebooks.com> has a collection of books searchable by country.

### **THE YEAR OF THE GORILLA**

**George Schaller**

A vividly written tale of adventures among the gorillas. This book is a wonderful, accessible account of field work under difficult and sometimes dangerous circumstances by one of the great wildlife biologists. In this classic, Schaller tells of the gorillas, the excitement of tracking animals in the jungle bureaucratic pitfalls and very real trouble with poachers. Illustrated with photographs and line drawings by the author.

### **GORILLAS IN THE MIST**

**Dian Fossey**

Fossey's highly personal, detailed account of the ecology and behavior of the mountain gorilla based on her 13 years among "the greatest of the great apes." These highly endangered gorillas are restricted to just six extinct volcanoes in the Virunga Mountains, an area 25 miles long and only 6-12 miles wide. She describes habituating her study group. Having named the animals, she follows the life history, diet and sex life of each, offering insight into both the study animals and researcher. Originally published in 1983.

### **THE SCRAMBLE FOR AFRICA**

**Thomas Pakenham**

A well written, meticulously researched history of the Victorian land grab in Africa. The book includes especially good portraits of the egomaniacal personalities who overran the continent, including, among others, Kitchener, Rhodes, Gordon and King Leopold. Subtitled "white man's conquest of the dark continent from 1876 to 1912," it's an absorbing tale of adventure, tragedy and farce.

### **EXPLORATION OF AFRICA, FROM CAIRO TO THE CAPE**

**Ann Hugon**

This jewel of a book chronicles the 19th-century exploration of Africa with hundreds of contemporary

paintings and prints, brief chapters on the expeditions, and a very useful chronology. Livingstone, Burton and others are featured in a series of journal excerpts.

### **THE WHITE NILE**

**Alan Moorehead**

A lively history of the Victorian search for the source of the Nile including the extraordinary tales of Burton and Speke, not to mention the famous meeting of Livingstone and Stanley.

### **ABYSSINIAN CHRONICLES**

**Moses Isegawa**

A riveting coming-of-age novel set in Uganda during the absurd, terrible reign of Ida Amin. It's a big, ambitious book that follows the author's own path -- and Uganda's history -- from rural Uganda to Kampala and, eventually, Europe.

### **THE IMPENETRABLE FOREST**

**Thor Hanson**

A memorable account of a peace corps worker in Uganda -- and the establishment of the tourism program in the Bwindi-Impenetrable Forest in the hills of southwest Uganda.

### **THE MYTH OF WILD AFRICA**

**Jonathan Adams, Thomas McShane**

The authors, associated with World Wildlife Fund, explode the romantic fallacy of an untouched continent where animals roam freely in sanctuaries. It's a no-holds-barred attack on old-style conservation in Africa.

### **WALKER'S PRIMATES OF THE WORLD**

**Ronald M. Nowak**

An authoritative, well-illustrated overview of the primates with an excellent overview, species-by-species survey and black-and-white photographs.