

Abercrombie & Kent
EAST AND SOUTHERN AFRICA



UGANDA

COUNTRY INFORMATION, FACTS & ADVICE

Uganda

Uganda is at the crossroads of where the West African jungles meet the East African savannahs and thus home to quickly varying landscapes: semi-deserts in the northeast, lush lowlands fringing the shores of Lake Victoria, and the mountain rainforests of Bwindi Impenetrable Forest and the Rwenzoris (the Mountains of the Moon) in the southwest. Set at the equator, Uganda is made up of four regions (central, Eastern, Northern and Western) on an area of 236,580 square kilometres, with its capital at Kampala. Such diverse topographies mean Uganda safaris offer a greater diversity of wildlife, people and landscapes than any other African destination, placing Uganda safaris amongst the richest experiences Africa has to offer.

Uganda is home to the mist covered "Mountains of the Moon" in the Rwenzori National Park, is the source of the world's longest river - the mighty Nile, and has the highest concentration of primates on earth, including the mountain gorilla which is one of the rarest animals on the planet.

There are about 790 mountain gorillas in the world with over 460 in Uganda. A visit to Bwindi Impenetrable Forest will bring guests face to face with man's closest animal relative.

Getting into Uganda

This is a guide only – please check with your nearest Uganda Embassy to ensure you meet the correct requirements.

All visitors are required to carry a passport that is valid for six months beyond the intended length of stay. There should be sufficient blank pages for entry stamps upon arrival.

Most travellers require a visa to enter into Uganda. Travellers who require a visa should apply for a visa online on the following website: <https://visas.immigration.go.ug/> at least two months prior to arrival. **Please note visas are not available on arrival.** Check here for nationalities that are visa-exempt <http://www.immigration.go.ug/services/visa-exempt-countries>.

It is imperative that every traveller arrives on tour with the proper documentation. It is the traveller's responsibility to obtain all documents that are necessary for admittance to the countries visited on his/her itinerary.

Keeping Healthy in Uganda

Malaria

Anti-Malarial precautions are recommended when visiting Uganda. It is important that you check with a qualified health professional for the most current information concerning your travel itinerary and personal health history. In addition, other personal protective measures, such as the use of insect repellents (containing the active DEET ingredient), covering arms and legs after dusk and avoiding the use of scented products can help to reduce malaria risk.

Yellow Fever

All travellers into Uganda must present a yellow fever certificate upon arrival at the airport.

It is also recommended that all international travellers ensure that their tetanus, Hepatitis A and polio vaccines are up-to-date.

Avoid using tap water for drinking or brushing teeth. Most hotels, camps and lodges use boiled and filtered water or bottled water to make ice but if you have any concerns please ask the manager. Bottled water is provided in all properties and it is advisable to drink plenty of water to stay hydrated especially during the hot seasons.

It is also suggested that you bring a smaller traveller's kit with remedies for minor stomach ailments or motion sickness. You should include an adequate supply (in your hand luggage) of any prescribed medication you may require while traveling.

Travellers with physical disabilities and those who require frequent or on-going medical attention should advise Abercrombie & Kent of their health situation at the time of booking (or at the time such a situation occurs should this be after the reservation is made).

Please note road and traffic conditions in Uganda differ significantly from those you will be used to. Although a number of inter-city tarmac roads are repaved and maintained periodically, they may deteriorate in periods of severe weather. During the rainy season (late March to mid-June), many roads, both urban and rural, are passable only with four-wheel-drive vehicles. In conservation areas, roads are not paved and the distances you will travel should not be underestimated.

We do recommend that you take out comprehensive travel insurance to cover you in the event of a medical emergency.

Tipping

Tipping is not compulsory in Uganda. 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 the staff have gone above and beyond for you. Should you feel you would like to acknowledge their service, please consider the following as a rough guide, per person per day.

| Type of Service | Group Size (Number of People) | | | | | |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5-9 | 10+ |
| Tour Director | 40- 50 | 30-50 | 20-40 | 15-30 | 12-20 | 12-15 |
| Trekking Guide | 20 | 20 | 20 | 20 | 20 | 20 |
| Trekking Porter | 15 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 15 |
| Driver | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 |
| Hotel Porters | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |

The above tipping guidelines are recommendations only and are not compulsory. Please use your own discretion in tipping, based on quality of service.

Restaurants

It is customary to add about 10% to the bill in restaurants, if the service has been satisfactory.

Taxis

Taxi drivers do not expect to be tipped but they appreciate the fare being rounded up.

Porterage

If you are being transferred by an Abercrombie & Kent representative to a hotel, then porterage and tipping of porters is already included. You are not expected to tip the A&K representative.

Talk the talk

Luganda is the official language in Uganda, although English is widely spoken and understood. Here are a few useful Luganda words and phrases to impress the locals:

| English | Luganda |
|--------------------------|---|
| I would like | njagala |
| I do not want | ssagala |
| Coffee | kaawa |
| Tea | chai |
| Please | Nkwegayiridde |
| Milk | amata |
| How much? | Mekka? |
| Food | mele, (<i>pronounced mere</i>) |
| A drink | ekyokunywa |
| It is a reasonable price | eyo bei nungi |
| It is very expensive | ezzo sente nyingi (<i>pronounce nyinji</i>) or nga ossera |
| I would like a cold beer | mpa beer enyogoga |
| Money | Ssente |
| I would like a taxi | nsobola kufuna taxi |
| I cannot eat meat | sisobola kulya nyama |

Weather

Uganda is in the tropics and is crossed by the Equator therefore it is mostly warm all year round. Temperatures vary from 16°C to 37°C depending on season throughout the year. Variations in temperature are relatively insignificant. Most parts of the country receive in excess of 1,500mm of precipitation annually, with the driest months being July to September and the wet months being December to February & March to May.

The exception is Bwindi Impenetrable Forest which is cool throughout the year.

This is a guideline only and unseasonal weather can occur so you should pack with a degree of flexibility in mind.

What to Pack

Casual, comfortable wash and wear clothing is most useful. It is certainly not necessary to bring a separate change of clothing for each day and evening, and it is recommended that you keep luggage to a minimum for your own comfort and ease of transport, especially if you are using light aircraft transfers.

- Casual lightweight cotton, khaki or neutral coloured clothes for safari
- Fleece or sweater and a warm jacket for game drives or cool evenings
- Swimsuit, scarf or bandana, kanga or sarong
- Wide brimmed hat/cap
- Personal toiletries, sun barrier creams; lip balm and insect repellent
- Binoculars, camera, flashlight and accessories (including any batteries)
- Sunglasses and prescription glasses

- Soft-sided luggage and fold-up daypack or shoulder pack to carry items
- Travel detergent
- Comfortable walking shoes with soft soles and beach sandals

Please note that all luxury hotels and most game lodges offer a same-day laundry service (at additional charges). This is a good reason not to pack too many clothes.

You will spend a considerable amount of time in a safari vehicle so be sure you pack comfortable clothing. It is not necessary to buy new safari-style clothes. The roads in the parks can be rough, especially if the rainy season was a harsh one, so be prepared for bumpy and dusty drives. If you have a bad back, you may consider bringing a back brace.

Avoiding the Baggage Blues

- Baggage allowances vary according to airline – check your airline for details. Most domestic scheduled and private charter flights to destinations within East Africa have a baggage allowance of 15 kilos per person only which must be in soft bags. This special weight restriction is strictly adhered to. Suitcases of dimensions greater than 24" x 17" x 7" are impossible to load onto light aircraft or in safari vehicles. Excess luggage might be charged but might also be refused if the flight is already at maximum capacity. Please note luggage storage facilities are available in Nairobi and Arusha at no extra cost.
- Do NOT pack or bring prohibited items to the airport – check the airports relevant to your trip
- Make sure there is contact information inside your bags as well as outside. Every piece of checked baggage should be locked and contain identification. In addition, do not pack valuable items (such as your camera) in checked baggage.
- In case your luggage is delayed make sure you pack essential supplies such as medication, contact lenses, toiletries, etc. in your carry-on bag. You may also consider packing an extra set of clothes in your carry-on bag. A&K will follow up late luggage with the airline on your behalf and ensure it gets to you as promptly as possible, if your safari has already begun. If you are without your luggage for the first few days, you will need to rely on the items brought in your carry-on.

Gorilla Tracking

When tracking the gorillas you will be in a rain forest, so it is likely to rain so do not forget a windbreaker or a light raincoat. You will need good hiking boots and a hat if you are gorilla tracking. Garden gloves are a good idea, to avoid stinging nettles, and gators are recommended. Walking stick is also a good idea - these can be provided at the starting point of the gorillas in Bwindi.

Religion & Etiquette

Uganda is a predominantly Christian country but has a large Muslim population in some areas. Modesty of dress is expected in these places. Slacks are entirely acceptable, but short skirts and bare arms should be avoided. Scarves must be worn over the head and all shoes removed when entering a mosque.

Electricity

Electricity in Uganda is based on English standards, meaning it is (usually) supplied at 220/240Volts, 50Hz. This means that all European electrical equipment should work, from laptop power supplies to mobile phone chargers. Wall sockets use an English 3 pin fused plug, which requires the use of travel adapters for those from other countries.

Many lodges will provide you with an adaptor in the room or offer the use of one when asking the reception. This is not a guaranteed service everywhere so you may want to bring your own.

We urge our guests to always use a travel adapter with a 'surge protector' facility to protect your equipment, or to use special, stabilized power outlets.

Some places, such as tented camps, run on generators or batteries during the day, providing a limited supply of power, and use no electrical power at all during the night.

There is a 12V DC outlet for a phone charger in every safari vehicle. Please do not forget to bring your charger(s).

Photography

When taking a photograph of locals, it is customary to ask for permission. It is forbidden to take pictures of certain buildings, such as police stations, airports or military structures. If you are unsure please ask your guide.

If you bring photographic equipment, make sure they are packed away in a dustproof camera bag. Make sure to bring additional batteries or the charger and an ample supply of memory cards. (It is better to bring several small memory cards than one big one in case one gets corrupted).

The **use of drones is not allowed in Uganda** without a specific license from the government. Please note that if you do bring a drone into the country it will be confiscated by a Customs Official on arrival and you may be subjected to a fine.

Money

Currency

The unit of currency in Uganda is the Uganda Shilling. Notes are available in 1000, 5000, 10,000, 20,000 and 50,000 Shilling denominations. Coins come in 50, 100, 200, 500 and 1000 Shilling values.

Foreign Exchange

The small amount of local currency you may need during your stay can be obtained at authorized facilities (such as hotels, banks and foreign exchange bureaus). Clients going directly on safari upon arrival may exchange money at the airport currency exchange if they wish. 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. Be aware that only paper currency will normally be accepted for exchange.

US Dollars are accepted everywhere although avoid taking with you notes older than 2007 as these will not be accepted.

ATM

Travellers who wish to use their ATM card overseas should check with their own individual bank to verify whether the ATM card will be valid in a particular country. Be advised you will only find ATM machines in big towns.

Credit Cards

Credit cards are accepted on a limited basis; most hotels, restaurants and shops in larger cities accept at least one major credit card such as Visa, MasterCard, or American Express.

Time Zone

The time zone in Uganda is GMT +3 hours throughout the year.

Shopping

Colorful pottery, woven baskets and mats are among the most popular souvenir purchases in Uganda. Locally-woven sisal baskets are durable and attractive and are sold at much lower prices than you will find in the American and European shops that have recently begun to import them.

In places where prices are not marked, bargaining is usually an accepted practice.

As a courtesy to our clients, our office will, if requested, help refer you to a shop that carries the merchandise you are looking for. This is not intended as A&K's endorsement of the shop nor responsibility for merchandise (or shipping arrangements) purchased from the shop.

- **Bring your purchases home with you.** Unless you are prepared to wait up to a year to receive your merchandise, do not have it shipped - not even by air freight.
- **Do not purchase expensive goods of supposed high quality unless you are absolutely sure of what you are buying** (or unless you like the item enough to buy it even if it is not authentic or as valuable as you thought). Unless you are an expert in gems, antiques, artefacts etc. do not assume that the quality and/or value of your purchase is as represented by the vendor, even if you have been referred to the shop by A&K. ABERCROMBIE & KENT does not profess to employ experts in the quality and/or value of retail or wholesale merchandise.
- **Always take the time to read the charge slips for credit card purchases before you sign them.** This may seem obvious; but in the excitement of making a foreign purchase, shoppers sometimes overlook this and are unpleasantly surprised when they return home and are billed by the credit card company. Taking a few moments to review the charge slip before signing it (and computing the exchange rate to be sure you are charged the right amount) can save you headaches later.

For purchases made abroad that are being hand-carried home, keep all sales receipts with you (in your hand luggage). It is also suggested that you pack all of your foreign purchases together in one bag (separate from your other personal belongings). You might consider bringing some "bubble wrap" and string for packing any fragile merchandise you purchase while traveling.

Please note that the purchase of "national treasures" for export from any country is strictly illegal and that the onus rests entirely on the buyer. In addition, U.S. and Canadian Customs prohibit the importation of any products made from endangered species of wildlife. If you are approached by someone offering this type of "curio" for sale, do not buy it. International agreements are such that, if you are caught with such a restricted item, it will almost certainly lead to prosecution.

Local Food & Drink

Along As a country, Uganda is stunningly lush and all sorts of fruits and vegetables grow within its borders. Matooke (bananas of the plantain type) are the country's national dish. Uganda grows lots of tropical fruits which include mangoes, paw paws, oranges, tangerines, avocados, jack fruits, lemons, sweet banana, sugar cane, various types of berries, guava and pineapples. There are varieties of fruits always in season and being sold on stalls all over the country especially on the roadside. But please remember to wash your fruit before eating it!

We suggest you try Matooke, a meal that consists of steamed green bananas which grow abundantly all over Uganda. Traditionally the bananas are wrapped with the banana leaves and steamed until they turn yellow and soft. The matooke is then mashed and served on a fresh banana leaf with either groundnut sauce (another Ugandan speciality), meat stew or smoked fish.