

AFRICA · WILDLIFE · ADVENTURE · HIKING · MOUNTAINS



Uganda

Uganda packs nearly half the world's mountain gorillas, Kibale's chimpanzees, Ishasha's tree-climbing lions and Murchison Falls into a green, lake-studded country roughly the size of the UK. Gorilla permits cost around half Rwanda's, Jinja's Nile rapids add white-water rafting, and the Rwenzori Mountains offer serious high-altitude trekking.

 Before you go, read the UK government's travel advice for Uganda and entry requirements (visas, passport validity). Last updated by FCDO 8 October 2026.

 CAPITAL Kampala	 CURRENCY Ugandan shilling (UGX) £1 ≈ UGX 5,392	 LANGUAGE English, Luganda Swahili	 BEST TIME Jun–Aug, Dec–Feb
 DAILY BUDGET £40–£300 ££ Moderate	 PLUGS Type G 240V · UK plugs fit	 FLIGHT FROM LONDON 8h 30m direct ~£600–£1,000 return	 TIME ZONE UTC+3 standard time

Most Uganda itineraries loop through the west from Entebbe. Murchison Falls lies in the north-west, where the Nile bursts through a narrow gorge; the road then runs south past the crater lakes around Fort Portal to Kibale's chimpanzees, Queen Elizabeth's Kazinga Channel and Ishasha's tree-climbing lions, ending in the steep forested hills of Bwindi for the gorillas and the terraced shores of Lake Bunyonyi. Ten to fourteen days covers it. Jinja, east of Kampala, adds rafting and kayaking where the Nile leaves Lake Victoria; Kidepo, in the remote north-east, rewards those with extra time.

Uganda feels greener and more rural than its neighbours, with roadside matoke stalls, tea estates and quick smiles. Driving distances are long and roads slow, so expect several full travel days. Costs depend more on park fees and permits than on hotels, which range from simple bandas to luxury lodges; a gorilla trek is often the single biggest expense. Game drives are less crowded than in Kenya or Tanzania, though big-cat sightings are less reliable. It suits active travellers who want primates and walking as much as a classic safari. Many are surprised by the cool, misty mornings in the south-west highlands.

Top 5 highlights

- 1

WILDLIFE

Bwindi Impenetrable National Park
Home to nearly half the world's mountain gorillas, this UNESCO-listed rainforest offers treks from four sectors — Buhoma, Ruhija, Rushaga and Nkuringo; an hour with a habituated family is the highlight of most trips.
- 2

NATURE

Murchison Falls National Park
Uganda's largest park, where the entire Nile forces itself through a gap about seven metres wide. Combine a boat trip to the foot of the falls with game drives for giraffes, elephants and lions on the northern bank.

3

WILDLIFE

Kibale National Park

Dense tropical forest with 13 primate species and East Africa's best chimpanzee tracking from Kanyanchu; habituation experiences let you spend a full day with a chimp community, and Bigodi swamp walks add birds.

4

WILDLIFE

Queen Elizabeth National Park

Savannah, crater lakes and the Kazinga Channel, where boat trips pass hippos, buffalo and elephants at close range; in the southern Ishasha sector, lions are famously found resting in fig trees.

5

ADVENTURE

Source of the Nile, Jinja

Where the Nile leaves Lake Victoria, Jinja is East Africa's adventure hub, with full-day rafting on big rapids, kayaking and paddleboarding, and a boat ride to the outflow Speke identified in 1862.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

Kampala

≈ 4.9 million people

A hilly, energetic capital worth a day or two: the Uganda Museum, the Kabaka's Palace and the National Mosque's minaret views, then nightlife in Kololo and Kabalagala.

2ND LARGEST CITY

Mbale

≈ 380,000 people

An eastern city beneath Mount Elgon, used mainly as a base for Sipi Falls, Bugisu coffee farms and hikes on Elgon's slopes; lively but with few sights of its own.

3RD LARGEST CITY

Jinja

≈ 260,000 people

Uganda's adventure town where the Nile leaves Lake Victoria: white-water rafting, kayaking and boat trips to the source, plus faded colonial and Indian-era architecture in the centre.

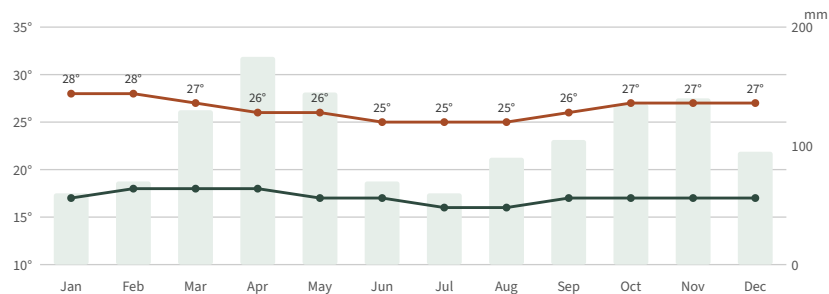
Populations are UN urban-area estimates; Kampala's includes contiguous suburbs such as Nansana, Kira and Mukono. Rankings below Kampala vary widely by source and boundary, and Mbarara, Gulu, Arua and Masaka are also cited as the second city.

When to go to Uganda

Best time: **Jun–Aug, Dec–Feb.**

**Average climate in Kampala**

— High °C
 — Low °C
 ■ Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

Jun	Uganda Martyrs' Day Each 3 June, huge crowds of pilgrims, many having walked from Kenya and Tanzania, gather at the Namugongo shrine near Kampala to honour Christian converts killed in 1885–87.
Aug	Imbalu In even-numbered years, Bagisu communities around Mbale hold Imbalu, the public circumcision ceremonies marking young men's passage to adulthood, with days of drumming, dancing and processions from August.
Nov	Nyege Nyege An internationally known festival of electronic and East African music held over several days beside the Nile in Jinja; recent editions have run in November, though dates and venue have moved over the years.

How much does Uganda cost?

SHOESTRING £40 per person / day ≈ UGX 215,670 hostels, street food, buses	MID-RANGE £110 per person / day ≈ UGX 593,092 3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis	COMFORTABLE £300 per person / day ≈ UGX 1,617,523 4-star+, guided trips, private transfers
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Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

Matoke Green cooking bananas steamed in their leaves and mashed, the staple of central and western Uganda, served with groundnut sauce, beans or meat stew.	Rolex Kampala's street-food icon: an omelette with tomato, onion and cabbage rolled inside a chapati — the name is a play on 'rolled eggs'.	Luwombo A Buganda celebration dish of chicken, beef or groundnut stew steamed in banana-leaf parcels, once reserved for the Kabaka's court.
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Getting around

Most visitors tour with a driver-guide in a 4x4 or pop-top safari vehicle, as parks are far apart and the roads to Bwindi and Kidepo are rough. Aerolink flies from Entebbe to airstrips serving Bwindi, Murchison, Queen Elizabeth and Kidepo. Long-distance buses and matatu minibuses connect towns cheaply but slowly. In Kampala, Uber, Bolt and SafeBoda work; if you use a boda-boda, insist on a helmet.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE  G 240V — UK plugs fit	EMERGENCY NUMBERS Telephone: 999 (ambulance, fire, police) Source: FCDO “Getting help”
DIALLING CODE +256	TIME ZONE UTC+3 (standard time)

TAP WATER

Not safe — drink bottled or treated water

DRIVING

On the left

TIPPING

Tip safari driver-guides around US\$10–20 a day and trackers and porters a few dollars each; 5–10% in restaurants is appreciated but not expected.

ETIQUETTE

Greetings matter, so ask how someone is before any request. Dress modestly away from lodges, ask before photographing people, and be aware that same-sex relations are criminalised under Ugandan law.

MAIN AIRPORTS

Entebbe International Airport (EBB), Entebbe

Visas & entry for Uganda

Shown for a British passport.

Visa required — apply before you go

You must have a visa to enter Uganda. Check which visa best fits your needs.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations



See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Hepatitis A

Tetanus

Typhoid

Yellow fever

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

Chikungunya

Dengue

Hepatitis B

Measles

Meningococcal disease

Rabies

Tuberculosis

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

A yellow fever vaccination certificate is required for all travellers (usually over 9 months or 1 year old). There is a risk of yellow fever in parts of the country — vaccination may be advised.

MALARIA

High risk of malaria

- There is a high risk of malaria in Uganda: antimalarial tablets recommended.

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Uganda

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Fri 25 Dec 2026

Christmas Day

Sat 26 Dec 2026

Boxing Day

Fri 1 Jan 2027	New Year's Day
Tue 26 Jan 2027	NRM Liberation Day
Tue 16 Feb 2027	Archbishop Janani Luwum Day
Mon 8 Mar 2027	Women's Day
Tue 9 Mar 2027	Eid al-Fitr (date may shift)
Fri 26 Mar 2027	Good Friday
Mon 29 Mar 2027	Easter Monday
Sat 1 May 2027	Labour Day
Sun 16 May 2027	Eid al-Adha (date may shift)
Thu 3 Jun 2027	Uganda Martyrs' Day
Wed 9 Jun 2027	National Heroes' Day
Sat 9 Oct 2027	Independence Day

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Useful phrases in Luganda

ENGLISH	LUGANDA	SAY IT
Hello	Oli otya?	<i>OH-lee OH-tyah</i>
Thank you	Webale	<i>weh-BAH-leh</i>
Please	Mwattu	<i>MWAH-too</i>
Excuse me	Owange	<i>oh-WAHN-geh</i>
How much is this?	Kino kibeera kya ssente mmeka?	<i>CHEE-noh chee-BEH-rah chah SEN-teh MEH-kah</i>

Know before you go

- Book gorilla permits through the Uganda Wildlife Authority or an operator months ahead for June–September and December–February; treks can take most of a day on steep, muddy slopes.
- A yellow fever certificate is required on arrival, and malaria is present across the country; bring antimalarials, repellent and long sleeves for the evenings.
- Bring clean, recent US dollar notes for park fees and tips, as older or damaged bills fetch poor rates, and use bank ATMs in Kampala and Entebbe for shillings.

Visa, health and safety rules change. Before you book or travel, check the FCDO travel advice (gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) and TravelHealthPro (travelhealthpro.org.uk). Costs are estimates. © 2026 Pick My Trip.