



Uganda

Includes »

Kampala.....	379
Entebbe.....	398
Rwenzori Mountains National Park.....	428
Queen Elizabeth National Park.....	432
Bwindi Impenetrable National Park.....	437
Lake Bunyonyi.....	445
Mgahinga Gorilla National Park.....	450
Ssesse Islands.....	455
Murchison Falls National Park.....	460
Kidepo Valley National Park.....	469

Best of Nature

- » Tracking gorillas (p437)
- » Source of the Nile River (p403)
- » 'Big Five' wildlife watching at Murchison Falls National Park (p460) and Ziwa Rhino Sanctuary (p457)

Best of Culture

- » Coffee tours at Sipi Falls (p415)
- » Forest walks with the Twa (Batwa) people (p439 & p451)

Why Go?

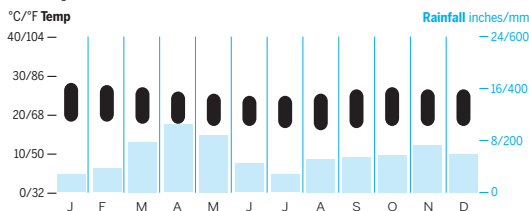
Emerging from the shadows of its dark history, a new dawn of tourism has risen in Uganda, polishing a glint back into the 'pearl of Africa'. Travellers are streaming in to explore what is basically the best of everything the continent has to offer.

For a relatively small country, there's a lot that's big about the place. It's home to the tallest mountain range in Africa, the world's longest river and the continent's largest lake. And with half the remaining mountain gorillas residing here, and the Big Five to be ticked off, wildlife watching is huge.

While anti-gay sentiments have cast a shadow on the otherwise positive tourism picture, and tensions continue to simmer with the Karamojong in the northeast, Uganda remains one of the safest destinations in Africa. Other than watching out for the odd hippo at your campsite, there's no more to worry about here than in most other countries.

When To Go

Kampala



Jun-Sep The best bet weather-wise, not too hot and with minimal rainfall.

Jan-Feb Perfect climate to head for the hills to climb the Rwenzori or Mt Elgon.

Oct-Nov Can be rainy, but fewer travellers means gorilla permits are much easier to obtain.

AT A GLANCE

- » **Currency** Uganda Shilling (US\$)
- » **Languages** English (official). Luganda and Swahili most widely understood
- » **Money** ATMs abundant, US dollars widely accepted (bills dating pre-2006 are not), credit cards rarely accepted
- » **Visas** single-entry tourist visas (US\$50), see p488

Fast Facts

- » **Area** 241,038 sq km
- » **Capital** Kampala
- » **Country code** 256
- » **Emergency number**
999 from landline or
112 from mobile phone
- » **Population** 34.6 million

Exchange Rates

Aus- tralia	A\$1	US\$2603
Canada	C\$1	US\$2466
Euro Zone	€1	US\$3235
Japan	¥100	US\$3032
New Zealand	NZ\$1	US\$2006
UK	UK£1	US\$3871
USA	US\$1	US\$2460

Set Your Budget

- » **Budget hotel double room** US\$20
- » **Meal at decent restaurant** US\$5 to US\$15
- » **Litre of petrol** US\$1.50
- » **Tracking mountain gorillas** US\$500

Itineraries

One Week Fly into Entebbe and get your first taste of wildlife at the Uganda Wildlife Education Centre (UWEC) and the Ngamba Island Chimpanzee Sanctuary – both home to injured or orphaned animals rescued from around Africa. Spend the next day sightseeing in Kampala, dining at one of its cosmopolitan restaurants, before a boozy night on the town. Cure your hangover the next day by being flung into the Nile while white-water rafting in Jinja, 80km east of Kampala. Then it's time to head west for some serious wildlife watching. Begin with the unforgettable experience of gorilla tracking in Bwindi Impenetrable National Park. Then it's further north to Queen Elizabeth National Park for tree-climbing lions, hippos and elephants to finish your one week visit.

Two Weeks A more realistic timeframe, which allows you to take in the above activities plus a few days chilling out on scenic Lake Bunyonyi, and Murchison Falls National Park for more animals and thundering waterfalls. Finish up by ticking off the Big Five at Ziwa Rhino Sanctuary on the way back to Kampala.

TRANSPORT IN UGANDA

- » Hiring a 4WD is the best way to get around Uganda.
- » Most people hire a driver, but it's becoming more common for tourists to get around the national parks on their own, especially those experienced at bush driving and self-sufficient with repairs.
- » Potholes are common, although roads are generally in good condition, but be warned things can get very messy come rainy season.
- » Uganda is well connected by public transport and you're likely to take a string of buses, minivans, boda-bodas (motorcycle taxis), ferries and shared cars – sometimes all in the same day.
- » Night travel is best avoided due to a high number of accidents and a risk of banditry.

Cultural Tips

- » Ugandans are a very polite and friendly people, and will often greet strangers on public transport or while walking in rural areas. The greeting comes not just with a simple 'hello' but also with an enquiry into how you and your family are doing – and the interest is genuine. In fact, you risk offending someone (though Ugandans would likely never show it) if you don't at least ask 'How are you?' before asking for information or beginning a conversation.
- » Displays of public affection are generally frowned upon, so it's best to avoid this. This is especially the case for gay and lesbian travellers, with Ugandans generally viewing such relationships as culturally taboo.