

# Uganda Prelude

## Entrance Requirements

### Passports

- A valid passport is required for entry into Uganda.
- Passport must be valid for at least 6 months beyond your scheduled return.
- You will need 2 blank pages per country for entry and exit stamps. "Two blank pages" is defined as the front and back of a page.
- If you need a new passport act now; it can take up to 6 weeks to receive your new passport. It is no longer possible to purchase additional pages for an existing passport. If you travel frequently, please consider purchasing a 52-page passport. For more information contact the National Passport Information Center at 877-487-2778 or visit <http://www.travel.state.gov>.

*Advisory: When you travel, we recommend that you make two copies of your first passport page; keep one copy at home in the unlikely event that your passport is lost, and take one copy along to use as an ID, should you leave your passport behind in the hotel safe deposit box. Air Tickets must be in the same name that appears on your passport so make certain that you are registered on your Classic Escapes program in the same exact way.*

### Visa

Visas are required for U.S. citizens to enter Uganda and must be applied for on-line at least two weeks prior to departure. If you will be participation on the optional extension to Rwanda then you should apply for an East African visa which allows travel between both Uganda and Rwanda. It will not be necessary to secure separate visas for each country.

You can use also this excellent service to obtain your visa:

- [www.g3visas.com/ClassicEscapes.html](http://www.g3visas.com/ClassicEscapes.html)

As of June 1, 2016, visas for Uganda are no longer issued on arrival. You must secure your visa on-line at: <https://www.visas.immigration.go.ug/#/>

Be prepared. You will need electronic copies of the following documents:

1. Information page of your passport
2. Passport size/style photo
3. Yellow Fever Inoculation Card
4. Approved Travel Document (Round-trip Air Ticket showing Uganda arrival and departure or a Trip Itinerary)

Complete the visa application by following the prompts and inserting information or uploading documents as requested. Once submitted, you will receive an ID number which you will need to change or update your application or to check the status.

A Letter of Approval including your passport photo and a bar code will be sent to you by e-mail. Please keep it along with your Yellow Fever inoculation Card with your passport in a secure location; you will need to present all three of these documents to an Immigration Officer upon arrival in Uganda. Once your documents are reviewed and approved, the Immigration Officer will place a visa sticker in your passport.

Payment for your visa must be made on-line. The current cost for a Single Entry visa is \$50 payable in US dollars. Dollars must be in good condition without tears or marks and minted on or after 2009.

## **Health & Wellness**

You will be traveling in fairly remote areas miles from any formal hospitals. You will receive information on travel and health insurance coverage and we highly recommend you register for this coverage. Full insurance coverage is compulsory for your safari.

### **Inoculations**

You are going to be visiting a country with a rich and diverse cultural history but which may be lacking in conveniences that many of us are accustomed to. As a result, you may be exposed to some pathogens that you would not ordinarily encounter in the U.S. Here are some preventative steps you can take to help ensure that you do not bring home more than your luggage.

In addition, the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) suggest that you be up to date on routine vaccines such as:

- MMR (measles, mumps, rubella)
- DTP (diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis)
- Varicella (chicken pox)
- Polio
- Influenza

The CDC recommends these vaccines for MOST travelers. They are NOT mandatory:

- Hepatitis A
- Typhoid

### **Yellow Fever**

As of August 2016, a Yellow Fever shot is mandatory for visitors entering Uganda. The vaccination must have been administered at least 10 days before arrival. This is being reinforced at immigration posts at borders and airports. In general, the easiest and safest thing to do is to get a yellow fever vaccination before you depart the USA and a signed yellow fever certificate, which you should carry with your passport. After immunization, an International Certificate of Vaccination is issued. It becomes valid 10 days after vaccination to meet entry and exit requirements for all countries. The Certificate is good for life.

If you were previously inoculated for Yellow Fever but your certificate has expired (more than 10 years old), you will receive compulsory lifetime stamp for a fee of US\$11. You must take the Certificate with you and present it to immigration officers on arrival.

### **Malaria**

**Malaria is present in Uganda.** Consult your doctor for a prescription for a malaria suppressant at least two weeks prior to departure as some tablets must be taken a week before you depart, as well as during and after trip. The best prevention is to avoid mosquito bites. Wear long slacks and long sleeved shirts, use mosquito nets, and a repellent with 30% DEET, Skin So Soft, or oil of citronella. Malaria symptoms can appear as few as 8 days after exposure or a year later. Do

not be misled by flu like symptoms of chills and fever. Since some U.S. doctors are unfamiliar with malaria, insist upon a blood test. Delays in treatment can have serious consequences.

### **Zika Virus**

Zika is endemic to Uganda and Rwanda; the CDC notes the risk of contracting the virus in either country is very low but recommends steps be taken to prevent mosquito bites. The Zika virus is spread mainly by mosquitoes but there is also a risk of contracting the disease through sexual contact. For most people, symptoms are so mild that they are unaware of having contracted the virus. Once infected it may take several days before any symptoms occur, and last for up to a week. The most common symptoms are fever, headache, rash, joint pain and red eyes. The Center for Disease Control provides the following advice for protection from contracting the Zika Virus:

- Use insect repellent that contains at least 20% DEET such as Cutter Backwoods and Off! Deep Woods and Skin So Soft Bug Guard Plus. If you are using Sunscreen, apply it first, let dry and then apply repellent. (Do not use products that contain both sunscreen and repellent)
- Cover Exposed Skin as much as possible with long-sleeved shirts, long pants, socks and a hat.
- Consider using clothing and gear that are treated with permethrin (an insecticide). You can purchase a solution to treat your own clothes or purchase pre-treated clothing available through outdoor outfitters such as REI or Columbia Sportswear.
- Zika can be spread through sexual contact, so use latex condoms for up to eight weeks.

When you return home, you should continue to take these precautions for up to three weeks, watch for symptoms and call your doctor if you suspect Zika.

### **Additional Information:**

The CDC offers information regarding malaria prevention at:

- [www.cdc.gov/travel/malariadrugs.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/travel/malariadrugs.htm)

The CDC issues regular travel health notices on their website:

- [www.cdc.gov/globalhealth/countries/uganda/](http://www.cdc.gov/globalhealth/countries/uganda/)

### **Water & Food**

Food, even on safari, is carefully prepared, and the local cuisine is refreshing. Most meals will include a buffet of some kind, whether it is the entire meal or a portion of it. Generally, water throughout Uganda is NOT safe to drink directly from the tap. Fortunately, bottled water is readily available, so please do not allow yourself to become dehydrated. It is very important that you drink plenty of water especially during the warmer months. It is generally recommended that guests drink at least 2 to 3 litres (4 to 6 pints) of water per day to limit the effects of dehydration. This excludes tea, coffee and alcoholic beverages, which act as diuretics and actually contributes to dehydration.

### **Physical Conditioning**

Mountain gorillas live in high altitudes, and the trek to see them is strenuous. It can be very humid and the terrain is often steep, rough and, at times, slippery and muddy. The treks, which usually last between two and eight hours, including one hour spent with the gorillas, may cover more than four miles in distance and may occur in any kind of weather: In addition you may also be walking for up to six hours

when viewing chimps in the Kibale Forest. In order to ensure that you enjoy your visit with the gorillas to the fullest extent, it is a good idea to engage in an exercise program for at least several weeks or even months before your departure.

Anyone with a heart condition or respiratory problems should not plan to participate, but please understand it is impossible to deduct any costs for any unused part of the tour. Because of the altitude, avoid alcohol, cigarettes, and heavy food, to best acclimatize. You should organize a small first aid kit. Skin infections are common; even the smallest wound should be disinfected and covered with a bandage.

### **Travel Insurance & Medical Evacuation**

We recommend that you consider a Trip Cancellation policy that also includes medical coverage and evacuation against unforeseen circumstances.

### **Climatic Conditions**

Uganda is a beautiful country and lovely to visit any time of the year. When gorilla trekking, it is not uncommon to encounter rain. After all, it is the rainforest you will be visiting and it rains quite a lot, but that will not stop you from trekking to see the gorillas, just have adequate raingear and hiking boots. The rainy season overall in the country follows the East Africa pattern – long rains in April and May, and short rains in November. Gorilla Viewing is actually better during the rainy season, as the animals are generally lower in elevation feeding and can be viewed with less trekking.

### **Altitude**

Although it is equatorial, much of Uganda is at altitudes from 3,600 to 6,000 feet, with trekking altitudes around 7,000 feet while in Bwindi. At certain heights, the phenomenon known as altitude sickness can occur. There are no specific factors such as age, gender, or physical condition that correlates with susceptibility to altitude sickness. Some people get it and some people don't, and some people may experience it one visit and not the next time. Symptoms include headache, fatigue, shortness of breath, lack of concentration, nausea, swelling of ankles, and in extreme cases, hallucination. Avoid alcohol, cigarettes, heavy food and strenuous physical activity. Citrus fruits and bananas may diminish the effects. If you do not feel well, take it easy. Put your feet up, drink plenty of clean (boiled or bottled) water, and take a siesta after lunch.

#### **Altitude Chart: (Feet)**

Bwindi Impenetrable Forest	3,800-8,551
Entebbe	3,717
Kibale Forest National Park	6,200
Murchison Falls National Park	2,031 - 4,239
Queen Elizabeth National Park	2,900 - 4,386

### **Temperature**

Kenya is divided by the Equator and enjoys a tropical climate. It is hot and humid at the coast, temperate inland and very dry in the north and northeast. The hottest months are February and March and the coldest are July and August. The long rains occur from April to June and short rains from October to December. Rainfall is sometimes heavy and tends to fall in the afternoon and evenings. Most of your destinations in Kenya boast temperatures between 70°F-90°F by day, and rarely below 55°F at night. Even during the short rains, the humidity is low for much of the day, and the night sky is clear enough to reveal the Milky Way.

Average Temperature (°F)	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bwindi Impenetrable Forest	53/75	52/75	52/73	54/72	54/72	50/73	50/73	52/73	52/75	52/73	52/73	52/73
Entebbe	63/80	64/80	64/80	64/78	64/77	63/77	61/79	61/77	62/79	63/80	63/79	63/79
Kibale Forest National Park	52/75	52/75	52/75	54/75	54/75	50/75	48/75	50/75	52/77	50/75	54/73	52/75
Murchison Falls	67/85	67/88	67/86	67/83	67/83	66/82	65/80	65/80	65/81	66/82	66/82	65/83
Queen Elizabeth National Park	58/79	58/79	59/79	60/77	61/78	58/77	57/79	59/80	59/80	60/79	59/77	60/79
Average Rainfall (inches):	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bwindi Impenetrable Forest	3.5	4.8	5.3	6.9	4.4	1.9	1.5	3.8	5.1	5.6	6.1	4.4
Entebbe	2.9	3.6	6.4	10.2	9.8	4.6	2.8	3.0	3.0	4.0	5.7	4.5
Kibale Forest National Park	2.6	3.1	4.5	5.5	3.9	1.2	0.8	2.2	3.9	4.3	4.5	3.5
Murchison Falls	1.5	2.5	5.1	6.0	8.3	7.1	7.6	7.6	7.9	8.1	5.9	3.9
Queen Elizabeth National Park	4.6	4.9	6.9	4.8	3.0	2.3	1.6	2.9	4.3	7.0	6.2	5.5

### **Recommended Packing List**

**For Gorilla Treks:** Climbing can be on a 45° incline, the path will zig zag and go up and down; well-broken-in boots or shoes should have jagged edge tread with high ankle support for the hiking. Bring a backpack to keep arms free. Wear long sleeves and long pants to protect your skin, and garden gloves to protect your hands. Be prepared for rain with a poncho, or a light umbrella. Lodges and camps provide umbrellas but they are not recommended for trekking, as passing through thick forest would be impossible.

Bring a hat with a brim; it not only protects you from the sun, which can be quite intense at midday, but will keep your head dry in case of rain. During early morning and late afternoon you may need a sweater.

### **Clothing**

- Long-sleeved shirts, slacks and socks to protect you from insect bites and sunburn
- Good quality sunglasses (preferably polarized).
- Sun hat with a brim
- Good walking shoes or light hiking boots with good ankle support
- Sandals or rubber flip/flops for poolside
- Swimsuit with light cover-up garment

- Lightweight jersey for cooler mornings
- Light raingear

### **Toiletries**

- Personal toiletries (basic amenities supplied by many establishments)
- Moisturizing cream & suntan lotion
- Insect repellent e.g. Tabard, Rid, Jungle Juice, OFF, etc.
- Basic medical kit (aspirins, Imodium, antiseptic/Antihistamine cream, etc.)
- Toothbrush and toothpaste
- Packaged wet tissues ("Wash & Dry" "Wet Ones")
- If you wear contact lenses, we recommend that you bring along a pair of glasses in case you get irritation

### **Other Things To Pack**

- Visas, tickets, passports, money, etc.
- Backpack to use during the day as you tour
- A small flashlight with extra batteries
- Adapter plugs & converters for electrical appliances
- A tiny calculator for estimating cost while shopping
- Binoculars

### **Camera Equipment**

- Camera, memory cards, chargers and extra batteries
- Lenses, cleaning fluid, lens tissue
- Waterproof/dustproof bags/cover for your camera

### **Tips on Clothing**

Take at least three changes of clothes for a week on safari in addition to your own detergent to wash a few things. Pack items that will layer well together as the mornings will be cooler and you will want to be able to shed them as the day heats up. Supplex pants and chinos travel better than jeans, which take forever to dry. Bright colors are not suitable for game viewing and camouflage clothes are illegal in many African countries. Additionally, dark colors, such as black, dark brown, navy, dark gray/charcoal can attract insects and tsetse flies. Camouflage clothes are often illegal. We recommend traveling with khaki which can mix and match easily and avoids all issues.

Your primary footwear should be close-toed and comfortable. Open toed shoes can "open" you up to insect bites, stubbed toes, splinters, thorns, et cetera. Flip flops should be limited to poolside, the beach or a shower stall. Take care of your feet and they will take care of you, and that includes having socks which can prevent blisters and insect bites.

### **Power & Connectivity**

Some camps in Uganda are powered by solar energy and there may not be outlets in your room for recharging phones and other appliances. In this case there will be charging stations available in the main living area of the lodge but be aware that the use of hairdryers and electric shavers will not possible in guest rooms.

## At a Glance

Voltage	240 Volts / 50Hz
Adapter Type G	
Adapter Type C	

## Cell Phones

Many travelers bring along their cell phones, not only for connecting to the internet and making phone calls, but for the easy to use camera functions. If you plan on using it as a phone keep in mind North American phones may not in Uganda, particularly in remote areas. Check with your service provider to determine if you can purchase a plan, or if your phone can be “unlocked”. If it can, you should be able to purchase inexpensive prepaid SIM cards.

*Advisory:* As most people travel to “get away from it all,” some limitations on the use of these phones when on tour need to be set. We suggest the following guidelines on the use of cell phones:

1. Keep the ring tone at a low volume to avoid disturbing other guests.
2. Use your phone in the privacy of your room and not any of the common areas: dining room, bar/lounge area, or on any of the vehicles.
3. Use your phone for outgoing calls and to check messages only. Incoming calls, and the loud ringing that ensues, should be curtailed.

## Time

Uganda is in the Eastern Africa Time Zone (EAT) and is eight hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time (EST). When it's noon in New York it is 8 PM in Uganda except during Daylight Savings Time, when Uganda is only seven hours ahead.

## EQUIPMENT

### Cameras

From smartphones to SLR cameras, digital photography has now made it simpler than ever to preserve the memories experienced during once-in-a-lifetime adventures. Most digital cameras use either an SD (secure digital) card or a CF (compact flash) card that comes in a variety of storage capacities ranging from 2–128 GB (gigabytes). Depending on the megapixel size of your particular camera and the format in which you choose to shoot your images, an 8GB card can hold as few as 200 images shot in RAW format (normally shot by pros and serious amateurs) to just over 2000 images shot as JPEGs (most common format shot by enthusiasts). For those cameras with megapixels higher than 12, it is recommended that at least 4-8GB cards are used and that you should always bring more than one card in case of card failure or corruption (rare but possible). If you are bringing a laptop, external USB hard drives of 1–2 TB (terabytes) are compact, relatively inexpensive, and an excellent way to store tens of thousands of images. In addition to ensuring that you bring the charger and adaptor/ converter for the location to where you are traveling, it is highly recommended that you bring at least one spare, fully charged battery for your camera. There may be locations where dependable power is not available for charging and spare batteries may prove to be invaluable and help ensure that you don't miss any photo opportunities.

## Video

Charging facilities for video AND digital cameras should be available in every camp or lodge on the safari, as long as you have a standard charger that will plug into 220 volts. Please bring along enough batteries to last you at least three days of filming.

## Binoculars

There will be an opportunity to observe some of the natural treasures of Namibia. Binoculars will add immeasurably to your viewing enjoyment. Preferably, binoculars should be at least 8 power (8x) and have a wide field of view to allow you to quickly find whatever it is you want to see. Some binoculars have the added advantage of "gathering light," making objects brighter in dim morning and evening conditions. This light-gathering capability is determined by a measurement called the "exit pupil", which is calculated by dividing the diameter of the front (objective) lens in millimeters by the power (8x, for example). These two measurements are commonly designated on binoculars as a measurement such as 8x42, which translates to 8 power with a 42 mm objective lens. The exit pupil in this instance is  $42/8$ , or 5.25. Since the human eye can process light delivered by an exit pupil of about 4.0, these binoculars will appear bright even in dim light.

Some very small binoculars are relatively inexpensive, such as 8x21. With a very narrow field of view (usually about 400 feet at 1,000 yards) and an exit pupil of only  $21/8 = 2.6$ , these binoculars are designed for viewing stationary objects in bright light, such as at the opera, and are poorly designed for looking at wildlife. You will be far happier with binoculars designated in the range of 8x40 to 10x50.

## Flashlights

As the grounds of many lodges and camps are unfenced, it is essential that you bring a small flashlight as you may encounter wild animals at night. You should also bring a spare globe as well as batteries as they may be unobtainable en route.

## MONEY MATTERS

### Currency

The unit of currency in Uganda is the Ugandan Shilling (UGS). There are coins in the following denominations: 50, 100, 200 and 500 in circulation concurrently with notes of similar denominations. Eventually, notes of 50 to 500 will be phased out and replaced by coins. There are bank notes in denominations of UGS 1,000, 5,000, 10,000, 20,000 and 50,000. U.S. dollars are widely accepted for tips and purchases but vendors will likely give change in local currency.

It is advisable to carry some cash in small denominations of US Dollars for purchases outside urban areas, and for tipping. Please note that foreign exchange bureaus, banks and lodges will only accept U.S. dollars minted in or after 2009 with no rips or markings. When exchanging currency, be aware that poorer exchange rates are given on smaller denominations of U.S. \$20 or smaller.

### Credit Cards/ATMs

Some major credit cards are accepted such as MasterCard and Visa, but be aware that American Express and Diners Club are often **not** accepted. Please note that Discover Card is basically unknown in Uganda.

Hotels and lodges will accept Visa and MasterCard but for purchases made at boutiques and markets, cash is the best option. Very few outlets are equipped to accept credit cards and those that are will charge a processing fee of 5% of your purchase price. Cash is also a safe option at restaurants where credit card fraud is becoming more prevalent. ATM machines are only available in the international airport and cities.

Be sure to notify your bank and credit card company when and where you will be traveling and ask what fees, if any will apply.

**Note:** As there is a potential for fraud anywhere in the world, we highly recommend that you do not use your debit cards overseas and exercise caution when using your credit cards. Do not let the card out of your sight and if a vendor tries to take the card into a back room, ask for your card back immediately and refrain from using it. Keep your valuables on you, including passports and credit cards, or locked in the safety deposit boxes when provided.

### **Shopping:**

Uganda is not necessarily known for its shopping, but some local handicrafts are available, including musical instruments, wood carvings, woven goods and pottery. The best selections are found in the cities. If you see something you like, buy it – you may not see it again anywhere else.

## **CODE OF CONDUCT**

### **Etiquette**

When greeting a man or woman in Uganda, a handshake is appropriate but it is best to wait for a woman to extend her hand, otherwise a bow or nod will suffice.

### **Gorilla Code of Conduct**

- A maximum number of six visitors in Uganda and eight in Rwanda may visit a group of habituated gorillas in a day. This minimizes behavioral disturbance to the gorillas and the risk of their exposure to human-borne diseases.
- DO NOT leave rubbish in the park. Whatever you bring into the forest should be carried back out with you.
- You will be taken to where the guides observed the gorillas the day before. From there you will follow the gorillas' trail to find them. Look out for the gorillas' nesting sites along the way.
- A 15-22 foot distance should try to be observed at all times from the gorillas. This is to protect them from catching human diseases. If you are sick with a cold, flu or other contagious illness, please do not visit the gorillas.
- You must stay in tight group when you are near the gorillas.
- Keep your voices down at all times. However, it is OK to ask the guide questions.
- Do not eat or drink while you are near the gorillas. Eating or drinking inevitably will increase the risk of food/drink morsels/droplets falling, which could increase the risk of transmission of diseases.
- Sometimes the gorillas charge. Follow the guides example (crouch down slowly, do not look the gorillas directly in the eyes and wait for the animals to pass). Do not try and take pictures and do not attempt to run away. Running away will increase the risk.
- Flash photography is not permitted! When taking pictures move about slowly and carefully.
- Do not touch the gorillas. They are wild animals.
- The maximum time you can spend with the gorillas is one hour per day. However, if the gorillas become agitated or nervous, the guide will finish the visit early.
- After the visit keep your voices down until you are 650 feet from the gorillas.

## Respecting Wildlife

- The wild animals are not like those found in theme parks – they are **not** tame.
- Many safari camps are unfenced and dangerous animals can (and do!) wander through the camps. Many of the animals and reptiles you will see are potentially dangerous. Attacks by wild animals are rare. However, there are no guarantees that such incidents will not occur.
- Please listen to the lodge and camp staff and guides. The safety precautions need to be taken seriously, and strictly adhered to.
- Don't go wandering off on your own without a guide – even to your rooms. After retiring to your rooms at night, don't leave them.
- Observe animals silently and with a minimum of disturbance to their natural activities. Loud talking on game drives can frighten the animals away.
- Never attempt to attract an animal's attention. Don't imitate animal sounds, clap your hands, pound the vehicle or throw objects.
- Please respect your driver-guide's judgment about proximity to lions, cheetahs and leopards. Don't insist that he take the vehicle closer so you can get a better photograph. A vehicle driven too close can hinder a hunt or cause animals to abandon a hard-earned meal.
- At Classic Escapes, we respect wildlife and are committed to the preservation of the national parks. Off-road driving is strictly prohibited. Please do not encourage your driver to drive off-road where it is not allowed simply to get a good photo, as the damage to the environment might be irreparable.
- Litter tossed on the ground can choke or poison animals and birds and is unsightly.
- Never attempt to feed or approach any wild animal on foot. This is especially important near lodges or in campsites where animals may have become accustomed to human visitors.
- Refrain from smoking on game drives. The dry African bush ignites very easily, and a flash fire can kill animals.