

TRAVEL TIPS

Dear Guest,

Shuaa Safaris is honoured for the consideration on your maiden visit to Uganda, “the Pearl of Africa”. Rest assured that we shall do everything in our power to ensure you have the most enjoyable and comfortable trip. However, unexpected delays and difficulties may be experienced from time to time but these will not compromise the quality of service. Please be patient and enjoy the more relaxed rhythm of life. You are on holiday after all, isn't it?!!

Mountain Gorilla Trekking:

This is a regulated and strenuous activity and one should be in good health, physically fit to participate and enjoy it. Professional guides will accompany each group; porters are also available to carry personal effects such as bottled water, packed meals and drinks at a pocket-friendly fee. Minimum age is fifteen years. Anyone with signs of communicable diseases like cough, fever or runny nose will not be allowed to trek. While possession of a gorilla permit is a guarantee of trekking, it cannot be a guarantee of sighting. However the chance of sighting is high at 95% or more. Maximum time allowed with the gorillas is one hour at a minimum distance of 7 meters.

No flash photography is allowed. Personal DVD recorders are allowed. Special arrangements need to be made for professional film makers, and filming permits are required for commercial photography and filming

We recommend a breathable and lightweight rain jacket or, a warm jacket, long-sleeved shirt and trousers, sturdy waterproof walking boots (seasoned or well worn footwear), leather gardening-type gloves, sunscreen, cap or sun hat, sunglasses, insect repellent, comfortable day pack for carrying water and minimum amount of personal items. Cameras and video cameras are allowed, but carry enough films and batteries

Accommodation:

The seasoned traveller will find hotels, lodges, guest houses and camps which are spread across the country.

Electricity and piped water supply may not always be available especially in the rural parts of Uganda, though clients will always find a hot shower waiting them after a long days' trek in any accommodation centre anywhere in Uganda.

Food may be basic, but you are usually assured of fresh produce and a variety of tropical fruits which taste so much better than supermarket imports in the West!

The more up market hotels, guest houses, lodges and safari tents offer excellent facilities on par with other safari destinations. However, remember we are a developing economy and expectations should not be unrealistic.

Shuaa Safaris takes care of your booking(s) in line with your budget (if informed). All of our prepared itineraries start from Kampala. If you require pre or post-safari hotel bookings in

Kampala please advise us and we will make the necessary arrangements. We recommend early notifications for reservations so as to avoid disappointment.

Health

More adventurous activities such as mountaineering, hiking, gorilla and chimp tracking, white-water rafting, canoeing and kayaking may pose additional risks and should be undertaken with care and caution. Clients must be fit and healthy.

Gorilla trekking and Chimp tracking are not permitted to those individuals who have signs of a communicable disease such as colds, flu and other air-borne diseases. Chimps and gorillas are highly susceptible to human diseases and it is therefore essential that you declare all illnesses and seek our advice if you are unsure. National Park Authorities reserve the right to deny access to individuals they consider unfit for any activity.

Anti-malaria tablets and mosquito repellents are essential. Seek advice from your home country on vaccination and inoculation requirements. Uganda is part of the Yellow Fever belt and although not always checked by Ugandan Immigration on arrival, a Yellow Fever card is required by law.

Please bring all personal medications and medical records. Medical services and facilities are basic. Clients are fully responsible for securing adequate medical insurance which should include evacuation cover.

It is recommended that you drink bottled or boiled water only. Sodas, beer and alcoholic beverages are generally considered safe. Coffee and tea, as well as fresh fruit juices, are prepared with boiled water.

Airport:

Most guests arrive by air landing at Entebbe International Airport. The drive to/from Entebbe/Kampala City is approximately 45 minutes. We can organize transfers to and from the airport for any size group.

Climate:

Uganda is on the Equator which gives it an ideal climate with little variation. Mean temperatures are between 21°C and 31°C all the year round. There are two rainy seasons from March to April and October to November. Travel is often slower in the rainy season and trekking more challenging but equally enjoyable. Mountainous areas tend to be much colder than the plains and receive more rain. Temperatures in mountainous areas can go down to 10°C in certain months. Lodges and other facilities are open all year round. There is no bad time of year to visit Uganda!

Airlines:

Several airlines that regularly service Uganda are; Brussels Airlines, Egypt Air, Ethiopian Airlines, Qatar Airways, Emirates, Air Tanzania, Kenya Airways, KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, South African Airways, Rwanda air, Uganda airlines. There are also several reputable East African based companies offering domestic and internal air travel.

Roads:

Highways and main roads are generally good and recent road works have much improved the road network in and around the country. Secondary roads vary in quality and may be poorly maintained. Be prepared for long and sometimes bumpy car journeys.

Visas:

Single entry tourist visas are available on arrival at Entebbe airport and at the land borders points. We recommend clients obtain them on arrival.

Uganda follows a policy of reciprocity (if your Country requires a Visa for Ugandans to enter, Uganda will impose the same).

Clothing:

Light summer cotton clothing supplemented by a sweater or jacket should be sufficient all year round for most of Uganda. In the hilly and mountainous areas, waterproof jackets or ponchos, strong waterproof walking boots and warmer fleece or heavy sweaters will be required in the evening. Informal dress is usual, although Ugandan's appreciate modest and descent dressing. Cotton slacks and flat comfortable walking shoes are recommended on safari. Don't forget to bring a hat and sun protection, along with your swimsuit.

Security:

Occasional security issues may arise as in any other developing country. Shuaa Safaris maintains up-to-date information on all parts of the country and will advise clients accordingly at the time of booking if any risks appear to be present. Basic precautions should be taken, as in all countries, and common sense should be used. It is advisable not to display expensive jewellery, leave bags unattended or money lying around. Most hotels and lodges have safe deposit boxes available.

We recommend that you leave original travel documents and passports with us in our safe (if you wish) and travel with photocopies. East African residents will need to show copy Passports and Work Permits to obtain resident discounts. If in doubt please ask us and we will advise you.

Photography:

No photographs of, or near, military buildings or soldiers is allowed. It is only polite to ask people before taking photographs. For digital photography, we recommend you bring extra batteries and a car charger. If you have special requirements, then we strongly suggest you come with the necessary equipment.

Most accommodation will have facilities for recharging batteries used by audio/visual equipment. Feel free to confirm in advance.

Telephone/Internet:

International telephone communication is good from Kampala but may be unreliable and difficult in some rural and up country areas due to factors such as the topography. Uganda has a good mobile phone network throughout the country and local SIM cards can be purchased throughout the Country. International roaming facilities are also available.

Internet services are widely available in Kampala through internet cafes as well as Hotspots and WIFI at hotels, coffee shops, and most major towns will have access, although the quality and speed of the connection varies.

All our drivers/guides have cell phones and maintain contact with the Head Office throughout safaris; airtime is purchased digitally.

Electricity:

Uganda: 240 volts. 3-pin (square) sockets; It is recommended that you bring your own adaptor. Most hotels, lodges or camps can make arrangements for recharging batteries. Please ask us on booking if you have specific requirements.

Alcohol:

Several brands of local and international beer are available, including leading local beers: Bell, Club, Pilsner and Nile Special beers. Most spirits and wines are imported and are readily available.

Drinking and driving is prohibited and purchase of alcohol under the age of 18 years is also illegal.

Currency:

The currency in Uganda is the Uganda Shilling. It is issued in denominations of 100,200,500 1000, 5000, 10,000, 20,000 and 50,000 Uganda Shillings notes.

US dollar, GB Pounds and EUROS are readily exchangeable. Large US dollar bills attract the best exchange rates. Currency exchange rates vary and are posted at all banks and forex bureaus around Kampala and in the local newspapers.

It is recommended that you change money in Kampala prior to safari where more favourable rates are offered. Attempting to change money upcountry can be frustrating and the rates are not good.

ATM machines are available in Kampala and all major towns and trading centres and most offer access to international banks/cards.

NB: US Dollar bills pre-2000 are most often not accepted in Uganda or are exchanged at a less favourable rate. Poor quality foreign currency notes may be rejected. Please ensure you bring with you new or notes in excellent condition with no stains or tears.

Travellers' Cheques:

Traveller cheques are accepted in Kampala, but at a less favourable rate than cash. Most lodges and hotels up Country will accept TCs although rates are generally poor.

Credit Cards:

VISA and MASTERCARD may be accepted at a few choice establishments in Kampala and some up-country hotels and lodges. Kindly note that credit cards are not widely accepted and most organizations reserve the right to levy a surcharge on credit card transactions, usually 7 - 9% on top of the original cost.

Banking:

Several international banks operate in Uganda including ABSA, Standard Chartered, Stanbic, and Citi Bank. Many local banks and forex bureaus also operate across the country. Generally the banking hours are 8.30 am to 4.00 pm, Monday to Friday and 8:30am – 1:00pm on Saturdays, public holidays and Sundays are closed for business. There are no legal restrictions on foreign exchange transactions and currency is easily convertible.

Begging/Donations:

We do not recommend clients giving money to beggars or street children as this only lends to the culture of begging and dependency. Donations can be made to established international and local charities that work with the homeless, street children or orphans.

We can arrange visits to local projects or institutions on request. If personal donations are preferred, we would suggest exercise books, pens or pencils are useful gifts.

Gratuities:

Ugandans tip according to level of service and there are no fixed or assumed rates. Culturally people may not feel it appropriate to outwardly show their appreciation for money given, however salaries are generally low in Uganda compared to neighbouring tourism destinations and all tips will be greatly appreciated.

On average tips are in the region of: 5-10% in restaurants; US\$5-10 per day, per client for safari driver/guides and US\$5-10 per client, per day for Ranger Guides; US\$5 per day for porters on mountaineering/hiking safaris and US\$3-5 for Forest Walk guides.

Tips are very personal and this is only a guide. Feel free to ask management for advice.

Drinking Water:

We recommend that you do not drink tap water. Bottled water is readily available at a Supermarket, shop, restaurant, lodge or hotel near you.

Foods:

A wide range of dishes, both traditional and international, are served in the hotels and restaurants. Fresh fruits are also available in local and super markets. If you have any dietary restrictions, please advise in advance. And if you have to have yellow mustard or black pepper to enjoy your meal, bring it with you.

Health Requirements:

With the emergency of the global COVID pandemic, proof of a negative test 72 hours before arrival in Uganda is mandatory. If coming from a high risk COVID infested country, one may be required to test again upon arrival. Certificates may be required for vaccinations against yellow fever. Check current medical advice on typhoid, cholera and hepatitis. But these diseases are NOT common, so do not feel obliged to spend hundreds of dollars on injections. Malaria risk is general, and a prophylaxis should be taken. It is advisable to start anti-malarial medications 10 – 14 days prior to arrival and continue with the same for 14 - 21 days after leaving East Africa.

Language:

The official language is English. Kiswahili and Luganda are commonly spoken throughout the country. There are 40 languages in total spoken throughout the country.

Luggage:

Airlines will offer you 20-40 Kgs, or two pieces, of luggage on most flights. It is preferable for you to use soft luggage as space in vehicles is limited.

Photography:

A pair of binoculars will prove extremely useful for a keen game viewer or birder. There is no charge for photography cameras and personal video recorders, but there may be a charge for commercial cameras in some places. Clients are responsible for any such fee. High-speed film is recommended for gorilla photos and high altitude filters are best for climbers. Check with your photo shop.

Security:

Precautions should be taken as in any major city. Unless safely deposit boxes are available in your hotel or lodge, always carry travel documents, travellers cheques, cash and other valuables with you at all times or leave them in the possession of Shuaa Safaris management. If you leave your travel documents behind, travel with a photocopy.

We recommend that you do not walk alone late in the night, but instead take a taxi. We can arrange the safe keeping of your passport and ticket in our offices upon request.

Guard yourself and your valuables as you would anywhere in the world. Stay aware of your surroundings and be cautious but friendly where possible.

Recreation

There are a variety of sports available in Kampala, Entebbe and Jinja city centres and indeed all major towns – squash, golf, tennis, etc. Fishing on Lake Victoria or the Nile River is popular. White water rafting and flat water canoeing have been introduced on the River Nile. White-water rafting on the Nile from Jinja is considered the best one day trip in the world. Mountain climbing and hiking are popular in the Rwenzori Mountains and on Mount Elgon. Avid climbers will want to check out the Virunga Volcanoes and Mount Moroto. For special interest itineraries, please request.

Transport:

The roads are generally in good condition. Four-wheel drive vehicles may be required for up-country use, especially in the national parks. We maintain a fleet of saloon cars, mini-buses and four-wheel drive vehicles, available on chauffeur driven basis. Self-drive vehicles other than saloon cars are hard to come by. Please inquire for further details and tariffs.

Visa:

Visas are generally available at all entry points including Entebbe airport.