

UGANDA



OVERVIEW

The Pearl of Africa', Uganda, shines right in the heart of Africa and in recent years has enjoyed a boom in tourism thanks to its enormously rewarding visitor offering. A tiny land-landlocked country, its modest size belies so much largesse: the largest freshwater lake in Africa; 12% of the world's bird species; and excellent safari viewing with not just the Big Five, but gorillas and chimpanzees as additional and unique highlights. Lush and verdant, with captivating wildlife experiences to be had throughout its diverse landscapes of rainforest, savannah, swamps, rivers and volcanic mountain ranges. The people are famed as warm and welcoming and the local food and city culture is worth making the time to experience. In 1908 Winston Churchill described Uganda as "a fairy tale. You climb up a railway instead of a beanstalk and at the end there is a wonderful new world. The scenery is different, the vegetation is different, the climate is different and the people are different." Although in 2021 you are more likely to arrive by plane, the other sentiments remain true to this day.

KEY FACTS

CAPITAL CITY	TOURIST HUB(S)
Kampala	Entebbe
RELIGION	LANGUAGE
Christian	Swahili, English
CURRENCY	TIME ZONE
Ugandan Shilling	GMT +3hrs

FLIGHT TIME (to Dar es Salaam)

London 10h10m | New York 16h55m | Dubai 5h25m

KNOWN FOR

Bwindi Forest National Park & its mountain gorillas
 Kibale Forest National Park & its chimpanzees
 Lake Victoria: second largest lake in the world
 UNESCO World Heritage Site, Queen Elizabeth National Park and the big five
 Snow-capped peaks of Rwenzori Mountains
 Over 10% of the world's bird species live in Uganda, 23 endemic to the Albertine Rift
 Kiza Rhino Sanctuary

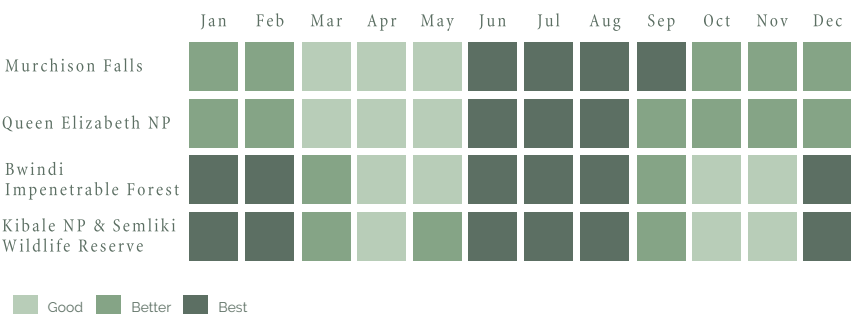
ACCESSIBILITY

Flights mainly go into the country's Entebbe International (code EBB) located just outside the town of Entebbe on the northern shores of Lake Victoria. There are direct flights from Europe, the Middle East and Asia with excellent connections around the African continent. Airlines include British Airways, Emirates, KLM, Qatar Airways, South African Airways, Kenya Airways and Ethiopian Airways. Primary intra-Africa city links include Jo'burg, Nairobi & Addis Ababa. **Roads** | within Uganda are good & connections from Kampala to the rest of the country are mostly on well-paved routes.

WHO FOR

Photographers
 Honeymooners
 Older Families
 Naturalists & Birders
 Primatologists
 Adrenaline Junkies

WHEN TO GO



PACKING

Light layers of clothing in neutral colours. Bright coloured clothing is not suitable for walking safaris. Packing checklist: Layers – long and short sleeve shirts and trousers | Warm fleece or jumper for cooler evenings | Waterproof jacket | Comfortable, sturdy shoes | Flip- flops/sandals | Swimming attire | hat/ baseball cap | Sunglasses and Sun-cream | Personal items – toiletries, small medical kit etc | Torch, plug adapters and charging equipment | Binoculars and camera | Books etc for siesta time

KEY REGIONS

ENTEebbe

The main gateway into Uganda, this lakeside city is 40km away from Kampala and is mostly just a stopover, with quite a few attractions to fill a day on either side of an itinerary. Beyond boat cruises on Lake Victoria, visitors can pop into the National Botanical Gardens which has a huge variety of exotic plant species and plenty of wildlife. For birders in particular, the Mbamba Swamps cannot be missed with its 300 species of birds including the magnificent shoebill stork. The Uganda Wildlife Education Centre is home to rescue animals and is an interesting educational experience on the wildlife of Uganda, and for those with extra time, Ngamba Island is well-worth visiting. Founded by the Jane Goodall Institute, it is an island refuge for over 40 rescued chimpanzees.

JINJA

An ideal spot for adrenaline junkies, the town of Jinja on the shores of Lake Victoria offers a variety of activities including white-water rafting along the Nile, bungee jumping, kayaking and horse riding. Located on the northern shore of the lake just 87km east of Kampala, it's easy to get to and include on an itinerary, time permitting. It even has a unique 9-hole golf course.

MURCHISON FALLS NATIONAL PARK

Established in 1952 and located on the shore of Lake Albert in northwest Uganda, the Murchison Falls National Park is roughly 3,893 km², bisected by the Victoria Nile for a distance of about 115 km. The Murchison waterfall is a highlight, where the Nile forces itself through a gap in the rocks just 7m wide, falling 43m into a pool below. The park is diverse, from woodland, wetland and savannah through to tropical forests. With nearly 80 mammal species and 450 bird species, the park is also home to over 800 chimpanzees. The wider area of the Murchison Falls Conservation Area (MFCA) includes the adjacent Bugungu Wildlife Reserve and Karuma Wildlife Reserve. While in the area, most people visit the Ziwa Rhino Sanctuary, a private and non-profit conservation project for Uganda's endangered animals including white rhinos. A visit here includes tracking the rhinos on foot with specialist guides.

KIBALE FOREST NATIONAL PARK

Often considered the best safari destination in Africa for chimpanzee trekking, this National Park has 13 species of primate living within its 795km² area. Located in the western part of Uganda, the park borders Queen Elizabeth National Park in the south creating a 180km-long wildlife corridor. Habitats within the park include moist evergreen forests and dry tropical forests right through to woodland and savannah across the rift valley floor. In addition to chimp trekking, many visit the adjacent Bigodi Wetland Sanctuary which directly contributes to the local community and is rich in wildlife. Visitors may also visit Fort Portal, a designated 'Tourism city of Uganda', a friendly and dynamic town known for its tea plantations with easy access to more than 50 different crater lakes surrounded by steep sided volcanoes.

QUEEN ELIZABETH NATIONAL PARK

Named after Queen Elizabeth when she visited the park in 1954, this National Park is located in the western part of Uganda between Lake George and Albert, with the Kazinga Channel crossing through its 1,810km² area. This is one of the best safari spots in the country and most popular for its tree climbing lions. There are over 600 species of birds here (6th highest density in the world) and besides the game drives on offer, visitors can also see the park in other ways including boat cruises up the channel or from above in a hot air balloon. The park has many different ecosystems including bushy grassland, Acacia woodland, lakeshores and swamps plus forest grassland. Wildlife highlights aside from the lions include elephants, Cape buffalo, Uganda kob, waterbuck, warthog, leopard, hyena, and even giant forest hogs.

KEY REGIONS

BWINDI IMPENETRABLE FOREST NATIONAL PARK

Located in the southwest part of Uganda on the rim of the Rift Valley, Bwindi Forest National Park is classified as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is best known for its large population of Mountain Gorillas. Many itineraries will only include Bwindi for the gorillas, while safari portions are taken in Kenya and elsewhere which is a real shame given how rich the wildlife offering is in Uganda. The forest protects over 300 gorillas and other primates including chimpanzees. It is also home to more than 200 butterfly species, 120 mammal species and nearly 350 bird species, 23 of which are endemic to the Albertine Rift. Visits here will also likely include cultural tours to local villages to meet with the Batwa Pygmy tribe, the original dwellers of this ancient jungle.

LAKE MBURO NATIONAL PARK

Lake Mburo National Park is not only rich in wildlife but is also where visitors can enjoy alternative activities, such as horseback riding, sport fishing and quad biking – and of course boat cruises on the lake. The park is also well known for its night-drives and therefore the chance to see a variety of animals that are less easy to see during the day. Beyond the elusive leopards, visitors may be lucky enough to see spotted hyenas, genet cats, bush pigs and the white-tailed mongoose and many other nocturnal species more active at night. Given the park is just 3 and a half hours away from Kampala, it's very accessible and a great addition on an itinerary.

MGAHINGA NATIONAL PARK

Located in southwest Uganda, this is the second park where gorillas can be found in in Uganda. It's also home to the endangered golden monkey. Established in 1991, it has an area of just 33.7km², making it is Uganda's smallest national park. It covers the slopes of the three northernmost Virunga Volcanoes, all extinct. 76 species of mammals call this park home including bush buck, forest elephants and leopards.

RWENZORI NATIONAL PARK

A hiker's dream, the Rwenzori National Park is home to the snow-capped Rwenzori Mountains, christened the 'Mountains of the Moon' by the Alexandrine geographer Ptolemy in AD150. It has the third largest mountain peak in Africa. The park was recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1994. There is a rich diversity of wildlife here with over 70 mammals including forest elephants and leopards. It is also home to nearly 220 species of birds, 17 of which are endemic to the park.