

Volunteering at AHCM

**Preparations for International Travel**

**Visa/Passport**

Contact the Ugandan Embassy or Consulate in your country to learn of visa and passport requirements. As of June 2006, the only vaccination required to enter Uganda is yellow fever, however you may prefer to get other vaccinations such as typhoid, hepatitis, measles, tetanus, polio, meningitis, tuberculosis, mumps, rubella, etc. Generally two passport photos along with a valid passport are sent to the Ugandan embassy/consulate, with included proof of yellow fever vaccination and visa application fee. Visas may be available at the airport for purchase and entry; however, as visa requirements can change frequently, it is best to contact the embassy/consulate in your country to learn of the latest requirements.

**Money**

It's not good to travel with a lot of cash in Uganda and Africa in general. With the recent technology of the credit cards and ATMs, banks that offer such services are now spread out the whole country even to the least districts of Uganda. A variety of foreign currencies may be exchanged in Uganda for Ugandan Shillings, but typically people carry United States Dollars or European Union Euros or pounds to exchange in Uganda, with US Dollars receiving the highest rates of exchange (as well as sometimes being able to directly purchase items with USD). To find the best rate it is necessary to go to different ForEx (Foreign Exchange)

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bureaus and banks, but typically ForEx bureaus offer a better rate than banks.

A big exception is the ForEx Bureau at Entebbe Airport, where the rates are poor. Try to exchange no more than necessary at the airport and wait until you reach Kampala for the majority. Typically Kampala are good, but in rural areas, or beyond these two large cities, you may find rates low. Be sure to note that Ugandan public holidays, Sundays, and Saturday afternoons might find banks and other bureaus closed.

Something to note as well is that Ugandan Exchange Bureaus are particularly sensitive to older currencies and small denominations. For example, with US Dollars, you'll receive a lower exchange rate for anything lower than a \$50 . Some places will give lower rates for anything less than a \$100 bill. In addition, if the date on the bill is less than 2003, you will receive a lower rate and nothing before 1993 is accepted. Bringing currencies in high denominations and with most recent dates will serve you well throughout Uganda.

### **Booking Travel**

Many flights from Europe and the US direct to Entebbe are via KLM airlines and their partners. However, some people choose to fly first to Nairobi, where cheaper direct flights can be found, and then either board a long distance bus heading to Kampala, or fly from Nairobi to Entebbe.

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Often you can find cheaper flights by doing some searching on the internet.

If you prefer to have many details, even your visa application, handled by someone experienced, we recommend you find a Travel Agent with experience in Africa, and Uganda in particular if possible.

If you'd like to go on formal safaris or visits to parks, with paid guides, while in country, there are two in-country companies that offer good rates to foreigners: Chico Travel and Gorilla Tours. Both can be found on the Ugandan Tourism Board's Website ([www.visituganda.com](http://www.visituganda.com)). Be certain to contact them well in advance, especially if you intend on visiting mountain gorillas, as permits go quickly in tourist seasons. For contact information please inquire with the project Volunteer Coordinator, Emma Young.

### **Arrival**

Flying into Uganda, you arrive at the Entebbe International Airport on the shores of Lake Victoria, about 3 km from the town center of Entebbe. About a 30-40 minute car ride south from Kampala, Uganda's capital city, most short term travelers prefer to move from Entebbe to Kampala as monetary exchange rates and shopping are better. While you can easily hire a private taxi (called "Special Hires" in Uganda) just outside the airport for about 40,000 Ugandan Shillings to take you into Kampala and then another for 20,000 to come to Another Hope. Another Hope is happy to pick you up from the airport for we believe that welcoming you from the airport would be the best option none

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stressing and. Please be certain to e-mail the Director, Ruth, your exact flight information so that you will be met and greeted on arrival.

If you prefer Another Hope to arrange your pick up, you need to prepare \$30 and this will be the cost for your travel from the airport to the AHCM plus any other airport costs like parking.

Kampala has a population of over 2.2 million people (2002 census) and is also the hub of long-haul bus networks. It is the economic and social nexus of Uganda, a country at the cross roads of development. Travelers are drawn by Uganda's beautiful mountains, trekking and birding opportunities and mountain gorillas, as well as a developed tourist industry that is relatively unknown. Travelers get the benefit of world class (if desired) accommodations without the crowds of more "discovered" lands.

### **Central Ugandan Languages**

Although English is the official language of Uganda, most children speak their native mother tongue until reaching primary school age. As a consequence, you'll be surrounded by people speaking the more-than-33 indigenous languages, many of whom, though, speak English well enough to assist travelers. Most people in Kampala understand English. Local languages vary by region. In Nansana you'll hear mostly Luganda and also at the children's home most of the children use Luganda and a few know English

Below is a table with some of the words that are commonly used and once you can learn these you will be able to communicate. Actually learning some Luganda words and using

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them will save you a lot in many things for example people may not cheat you while buying things because they think you have stayed in Uganda for along time that's why you have learnt Luganda

ENGLISH	LUGANDA
How are you?	Olyotya e yo?
I am fine.	Buluungi
Sir	Ssebo
Madam	Nyabo
A child	Omwana
A boy	Omuleenze
A girl	Omuwala
Mother	Maama
Father	Tatta
Where do you come from?	Ovawaa?
I come from (America)	Nva (America)
It is ok	Kale
Who are you?	Gwe ani?
I am (Matthew)	Ye nze (Matthew)
Food	Emere
Water	Amazzii
You are welcome	Tusanuse okulaba
Welcome back	Kulika yo
Thank you	Webbale
Come	Jjangu
Go	Genda
Pray	Sabba
Eat	Lya
Sit	Tuula

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Here	Waano
A Chair	Entebbe
I want	Njagala

Greetings are important in Uganda and it is considered abrupt to speak without formally greeting, or rude if greetings are ignored. Taking the time to greet someone with, "Hello, how are you?" is courteous and well received.

Coming from a foreign country, you may be greeted by children and others with shouts of "Muzungu!" followed by whatever English words they are familiar with. Do not take offense to this term, it is meant to recognize your uniqueness and calling out to you as such is a form of greeting for them. Smiles, waves, or answers back by you will be well received.

**The Project Environs**

AHCM is located in Nansana East II Zone, a small town in Wakiso district it's around 7km. it's usually a 15-30min bus ride from the Kampala Old Taxi Park to Nansana.

The weather these days is unpredictable, so you any time it can rain. Being here, you'll believe it! The climate is relatively cool to that of other African countries, and the sunsets offer stunning pause. Lying on the equator, Uganda's climate does not suffer from seasonal temperature variations as it might elsewhere, but you will find that rainfall patterns vary. April, May, October, and November have higher rainfall. Please be sure to bring sunscreen and anti-fungal cream or talc- it is a warm and moist

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environment! Also because of the rains, mosquito breed a lot so please carry a net with you to avoid suffering from malaria

### **Ugandan Social Behavior**

#### **Relating to the Children**

The children will refer to you as "Auntie" (women) or "Uncle" (men) as a sign of respect. Throughout central Uganda, females will also kneel to those older and to males while greeting. It is not expected that female visitors would do such, and you'll find that the children will adapt their behavior depending on the individual's culture and preference. For example, some of the girls will not kneel to foreigners, understanding their preference is for girls not to kneel and no disrespect is intended. The children will respect your privacy, only entering your room with permission, but you'll find them to be affectionate, open and inquisitive.

#### **Romance & Relationships**

The area of opposite sex relations causes most culture clashes. Relationships are conducted in different ways in Uganda, compared to the west, and you'll need to be careful in your interactions with members of the opposite sex and with young ones, who have no way of recognizing that your behavior is indicative of a cultural difference and not an intended action. In Uganda, single men and women are discouraged from spending a great deal of time together as it is likely to be interpreted that the relationship is leading to marriage and you are courting. Public displays

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of affection are actively discouraged and rarely seen, even between husband and wife. The one exception is that close friends of the same sex, particularly men, can be seen grasping and walking hand in hand. We would ask you to be flexible and respect the local culture and customs in these regards, but recognize as well that these are not laws or rules that cannot be bent. Please consider though that your intended meaning will be seen within the framework of someone raised here and so may be construed inappropriately.

### **Time Consciousness**

Time can be accounted differently in Africa, and Uganda is not an exception. It's not true however to say that Africans cannot keep time; just as it is not true that people from more developed countries value keeping time over family and human relationships. Travel and activities take longer in Uganda and this is reflected in meetings that start late, etc. Each culture has something to learn from the other. We suggest you practice patience, bringing a book with you if you need to have something to do while waiting at various times. Enjoy being here, knowing that patience is a good quality to develop!

### **Clothing**

As with most countries, the acceptable practices for clothing depend on specific location and culture. Travel to any town center, is considered an event worthy of dressing in your best, neatly pressed clothes. You may want to bring sunglasses, a hat, and a lightweight sweater/jacket for the

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evenings or rainy weather. Following are suggestions to avoid causing offense in your choice of clothing.

#### **Women's**

Uganda is becoming more progressive and women can be seen wearing trousers, but in rural villages, this may actually be seen as an invitation to prostitution. Our best recommendation to women is that trousers are acceptable, but shorts for holidays or outings should not be worn. If you feel you must wear shorts, we recommend you never wear them off the base compound, as exposing the thigh is considered offensive and/or suggestive. Women in Uganda typically wear skirts or dresses, with the thighs always being covered, and with underskirts obscuring the outline of legs.

#### **Men's**

Men do wear shorts, but these typically cover the thighs, unless they are on sports teams in current, active play.

#### **Shoes**

Sandals are typical in Uganda, for both men and women. A sturdy and comfortable pair of walking shoes that can look nice in dusty or muddy conditions is most helpful. In addition,

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### **Health**

#### **General Health**

It's wise to drink water regularly. The symptoms of dehydration can include headache, joint aches, kidney and bladder pain, etc. Drinking water will keep you healthy. Applying sunscreen is advisable as often we are out in the sun for many hours without thought. While a tan might be fashionable, a burn is not.

#### **Malaria**

Malaria remains a killer disease in Sub-Saharan Africa, but taking medicinal preventatives regularly, sleeping under a mosquito net, and covering up and applying repellent in early mornings and at evening can drastically minimize malaria's threat to your health. Symptoms can vary, but a fever should be seen by physician to rule malaria out. It's good to trust the advice of knowledgeable local people as well, as they have experience with this disease.

#### **HIV/AIDS**

HIV/AIDS remains a serious problem in Uganda, despite decreasing rates of infection in many areas. Heterosexual sex and passing from mother to child at birth remain the most common methods of contracting the disease here. However, despite abstaining from sex, you might contract the disease from cleaning up bodily fluids (e.g., blood, vomit, diarrhea) or if you have contact with open wounds. There is no way visual way to tell if a person has HIV at whatever age, so please be certain to take precautions. Use bleach and gloves if you are cleaning up blood. Don't share

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razors or toothbrushes and avoid injections from unreliable sources. Use condoms for heterosexual sex with partners of unknown background.

### **Bilharzia**

A skin-burrowing snail, Bilharzia can be contracted by walking through or touching the water on the shores of Lake Victoria. Be careful walking near the shores.

If you forget and step into the water, rub the area vigorously with a dry towel.

### **Putsi Flies**

When clothes are left on the line to dry, the putsi fly may lay its eggs into the wet clothes. When you wear the clothes, your body heat causes the eggs to hatch and the larva will burrow into your skin, eventually forming a boil as it grows. To avoid this problem, do not leave your clothes to dry overnight. In addition, ironing kills the larva and other germs and is recommended for all clothes and bed sheets.

### ***Communication***

#### **Transport**

Transport in Uganda varies considerably in comfort and safety. **Matatu(s)** (white and blue minibuses that are often called "Taxis") are the most common means of getting around, offering a fast and inexpensive service. The only drawback of a matatu- there is always room for 1 more and you might find yourself crowded with 24 people in a minivan

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meant for 14. A matatu from Kampala to Nansana and vice versa costs 1200 USH and Nansana to town 800 USH. **Boda Bodas** are motorbikes/cycles that have a seat on the back and are generally used for short trips. A helmet is sometimes offered and you are exposed to the dusty or wet conditions of the environment, but they are fast and relatively cheap for being a private hire. Up to 3 people can ride on a boda boda, with women sitting side-saddle and men straddling. Taking a boda boda from Nansana to Kampala is 4000 USH.

### **What to Bring for yourself**

A recommended list of items for your personal safety and comfort includes:

- Lightweight clothing (including a light jacket), in fabrics and colors that don't wrinkle easily and appear clean with a bit of dust on them,
- A good pair of lightweight walking shoes in a color that looks clean when dirty,
- A luggage padlock, especially if you plan to travel away from the project,
- For women- enough tampons to last the entire trip (they are hard to locate and expensive, although pads are readily found),
- A lightweight towel for baths,
- A torch (flashlight) with extra battery cells,
- Contact lens fluids (if needed),
- SPF 15 sunscreen,

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- Anti-malarial pills (contact your in-country health travel advisor or physician),
- A drying antiseptic (e.g. iodine, potassium permanganate),
- Small dressings (i.e. Band-Aids, plasters),
- Headache/Pain medication,
- Antifungal cream,
- Ciprofloxacin (an antibiotic that will serve you well if you get 'traveler's diarrhea),
- Antibiotic eye drops (for conjunctivitis),
- Tweezers (for thorns, burrowing insects, wood splinters, etc.),
- A Thermometer,
- Condoms (if an in-country sexual relationship is a potential for you),
- A water filter, or other method for purifying water beyond boiling,
- A compact mirror
- Any plug converters you'll need for electronics.  
Electricity, when available is 240 volts at 50Hz (3-prong style outlets).

The Bradt Uganda Travel Guide is highly recommended, as is the ITMB International Travel Map of Uganda. Both will serve you well in country and during your preparations for travel, especially if you plan to travel beyond the project

Yours truly,

Nambowa Ruth Bulyaba

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