

PEARL

of Africa
February 2024



**BushBaby visits
Uganda and their
photos tell the
story**

**Cooking School Uganda
makes a splash at the
Olympiad in india**

**GORILLA TREKKING IN
BWINDI**

Bradt Travel Directory

EXPLORE UGANDA

Meet the world's newest baby mountain gorilla 🐼 born in the Bikingi Mountain Gorilla Family. We are glad to share with you this first mobile image from our field team in Rushaga - Bwindi Impenetrable NP, Uganda. The baby was born to Adult Female Mucecuru who is a member of the Bikingi gorilla group, famously known for the Gorilla Habituation Experience. The baby was first seen yesterday but is expected to have been born on the night of Friday, 2nd February 2024. This new birth brings the total number of mountain gorillas in the family to 09 (nine) individuals. We congratulate Silverback Kaharata (the dad) and Mucecuru (the mom) as well as the whole Bikingi family on this great news. We wish the baby a long and happy life.



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Cover photo by Manfred Suter

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NEW VISION #GCICMediaReview

UGANDA RANKED 4TH LEADING WORLD TOURISM DESTINATION

Bradt Guides, an international tourism agency, has thrust Uganda into the limelight by ranking it as the fourth top tourism destination in the world to explore this year.

Please note : Numbers are not page numbers. You can click on the articles you wish to read or simply enjoy the full magazine page after page!



When you see the video image, click to watch a video



All telephone, website and other relevant links are connected so feel free to connect directly using those links



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THIS IS THE STORY OF MANFRED AND MAYA (AND THEIR UNIQUE BUSH BABY)

I met Maya and Manfred in front of the evening bonfire at Bonamanzi. I was captivated by Manfreds beautiful photographs and Maya's story of translates wildlife stories into German for children. To introduce them, they retired early, sold their home in Switzerland and built their Bushbaby, designed to take them across Africa.... Over the next few issues of Touch of the wild, we follow their journey as they zigzag across Africa

Happiness means creating and seizing opportunities

We have both been traveling together for 20 years now and have followed the above motto. We have worked for our happiness, both at work and in our free time, and we still do. Until the end of March 2023, we were involved in working life - Maya since her early retirement in 2020 at least temporarily and Manfred with a reduced workload.

We were and are lucky enough to have children and dogs; they have helped determine and enriched our lives. Maya has three adult sons and a great-granddaughter, Manfred always worked with protection dogs that lived in the family.

We have traveled together for many years because our curiosity knows no bounds. What started as an organized short trip to an Egyptian resort has now become our everyday life: being out and about, experiencing new things, enjoying the sun, water, earth and wind as well as the culture, food and drink of other countries, with open eyes and ears go through the world. We prefer being alone and wild nature to cities and crowds and love the wildlife that captivates us.



Our countless short trips around the world and different continents as well as our volunteer work in various areas, with people and animals, have ultimately shown us the direction and our skills and favorite activities complement our desire to travel. At the beginning of 2023 we sold our dream homes in the canton of Zug, and since then we have limited ourselves to a few motorized square meters of interior space and the huge garden that every environment offers us. Letting go of our usual home freed our hands to take the wheel and experience the whole world as home. In Bushbaby or the many tourist accommodations that are available everywhere - even at home. Without any rush and with as much time as we want to spend in one place.

Since February 2023 we have been traveling in Southern Africa with Bushbaby, our dream vehicle built for us, renewing beautiful memories and experiencing and exploring new things. Manfred captures this in photos while I write (diary), translate and make sure that my books get distributed to people for a good cause.

**AS TOLD BY MAYA ON THEIR WEBSITE WWW.BUSHBABY.INFO
(CATCH THE INTERVIEW ON YOUTUBE AND PODCAST ICONS BELOW)**



#1

THE CREATION AND BIRTH OF THE BUSHBABY....



I was born in Japan in 2018, as a Toyota pick-up with a two-seater cabin, model GRJ 79. After a stopover in the Middle East, I was brought to the workshop of the company "Extrem Fahrzeug" in Schwenningen, Germany.



Based on their experiences with rental vehicles with roof tents in southern Africa, Manfred and Maya had already given a lot of thought to what would become of me and communicated this to the experts at Extrem. So they combined their knowledge with the ideas of Manfred and Maya and developed a homely space miracle in which you can live comfortably when the weather demands it and, above all, spend time outdoors easily and comfortably. The first destination should be southern Africa, where in many places you can't buy everything around the corner and therefore need a lot of cooling and storage space. By the way, I was named Bushbaby because these little African animals are small, fast and pretty and can move quickly anywhere - as I am supposed to do in a wide variety of landscapes. And of course because Manfred and Maya love bush babies.





In place of my loading area, a living cabin made of insulated aluminum sandwich was installed, with a roof tent running the entire length over the driver's cabin, a roof window, side windows, a door at the rear and some flaps to make everyday life easier. The cabin width is divided into three parts: kitchen and bench, with the aisle in between. There is a 100 liter water tank, a boiler, an auxiliary heater and lithium batteries that store the solar energy from the three panels so that we can charge and use our devices.

My V6 engine drinks from two tanks that hold 90 and 105 liters of gasoline respectively. I need between 16 to 20 liters per hundred kilometers, of course depending on how I drive and how I drive. Of course, I have four-wheel drive that can be switched on manually, a gear reduction and a differential lock so that I can get through rough terrain. However, my height (2.65m, with roof box approx. 3m) is the biggest obstacle, or at least causes the most fears.

Since everything wasn't technically perfect, the "vehicle upgraders" in Neuheim/Switzerland upgraded and improved it. So today everything works perfectly and a socket allows you to work outside - as we all know, it gets dark very early in southern Africa. On my roof and the former bike rack there are three huge boxes attached to lashing rails in which tents, spare canisters, snorkeling gear and everything that is not used so often is stowed away.

I am particularly proud of my inner life. The cabinets, made of the finest quality wood, have folded doors so that no (or at least very little) dust gets in. A bench hides a huge material box, the batteries and the emergency toilet (portapotti with bag principle). Thanks to an additional open storage space, it not only allows you to sit comfortably but also offers an emergency shelter, just like the floor on which you can make a bed with mats if the roof tent has to remain closed exceptionally for weather or safety reasons. The drawer with two separate refrigerators can be used to freeze or cool according to your needs.

Thanks to cupboards and drawers we can carry a huge amount of household items and clothes, games, books and whatever else we need. A small pull-out table allows you to work or eat inside. Of course, you can also illuminate the living room with numerous lights and there are enough sockets and USB ports.

The bed on a board with a ship's mattress can be lifted up to the tent when the tent is opened, which takes about two minutes and is always the first thing to do in a new place, so that the entire interior offers standing height.

One of the most brilliant things about me are the outside flaps. For example, they make it possible to remove the table and chairs when the tent is unopened, to store workshop equipment for my maintenance or for small breakdowns, and to store the kitchen. This can be accessed both from inside and outside. The two-flame gas stove is attached to the flap on the outside, so that cooking can be done with little effort - connecting the gas hose to the bottle hanging outside.

To improve the comfort and to ensure vital mosquito protection, Manfred and Maya have a mosquito tent with them and a tarp, a fine sheet, can be pulled into a rail on both sides of me so that I can sit under it in the shade.

Manfred and Maya are thrilled to be traveling with me and are very, very proud of me and of the implementation of their ideas!



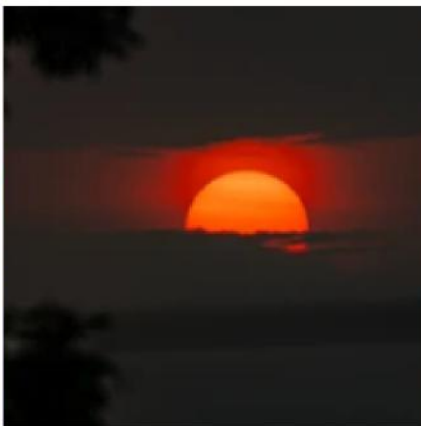
www.bushbaby.info

www.manfredsuter.com





For three weeks, from January 8th to 29th, 2024, four of us went on a guided trip to the most beautiful and special places in Uganda. These leave deep impressions on us and arouse anticipation for the later and longer visit with Bushbaby. Within this short time and with an extremely dense, interesting and well-orchestrated program, we experience so much that it is not easy to summarize our impressions.



Long journeys - insight into everyday life

Our tour takes us particularly through the west of the green and incredibly fertile country and begins in Entebbe with a shoebill tour into the swamps on Lake Victoria, a hike in the botanical garden and a visit to Chimpanzee Island. On good main roads and bumpy side roads, progress is not always quick and we spend a lot of time in the car. However, there is always a lot to see and marvel at, be it all the different means of transport and their diverse, often surprising loads, the colorful markets and shops along the streets or the people at work. In the small shops that line the side of the road you can buy everything from piles of vegetables grown in the garden to fish and meat dangling from hooks to bed frames, mattresses and coffins. (Many of the snapshots are taken from inside the vehicle.)



The landscape of Uganda is characterized by hills, mountains, watercourses, jungles and lakes. In between, every centimeter of earth seems to have been cultivated and even on the steepest mountain slopes everything is cultivated. The basis of life is correspondingly rich: In addition to corn, potatoes, rice and bananas, wood and sugar cane are grown on a large scale, and all kinds of vegetables are grown, which are complemented by every tropical fruit imaginable. In between, cows and goats graze everywhere, while chickens pick up whatever they find in the squares in front of the plastered brick houses. Peanuts, coffee beans and corn kernels are laid out on tarpaulins to dry here and are picked from the cobs by children and women.



Enterprising, hard-working, hospitable and cheerful people

Everyone here seems very busy, the street is alive. Water is fetched in canisters, goods are brought to market, cleaned and played with - with the simplest games such as bicycle tires or wooden toys.

The main means of transport is the motorcycle, which is also used to transport everything from chickens and goats to goods that are meters long or wide to families of five. On Uganda's roads, driving is based on the rule of the strongest: after driving straight towards each other, the weaker one gives way.

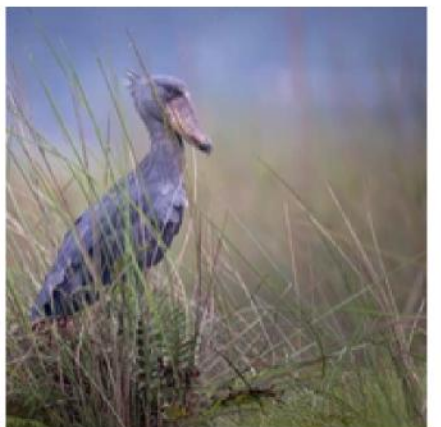
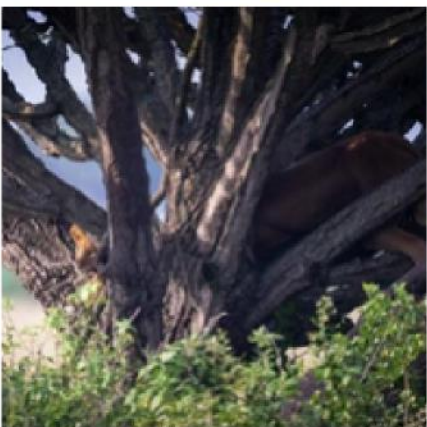
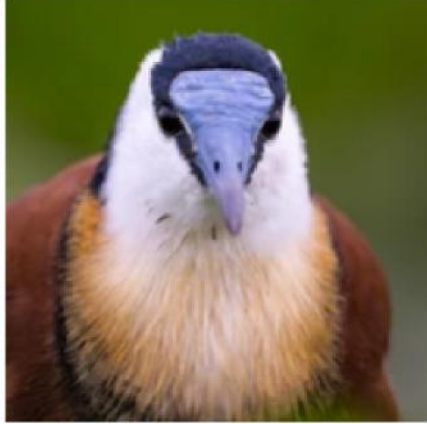


Birds, monkeys and other animals

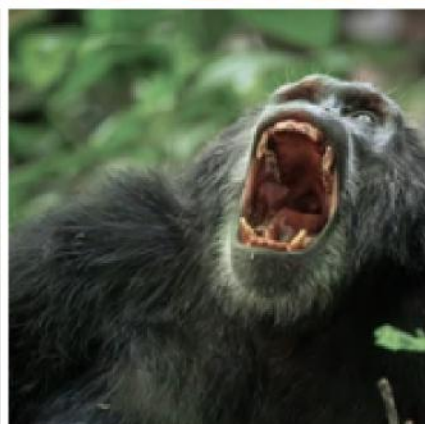
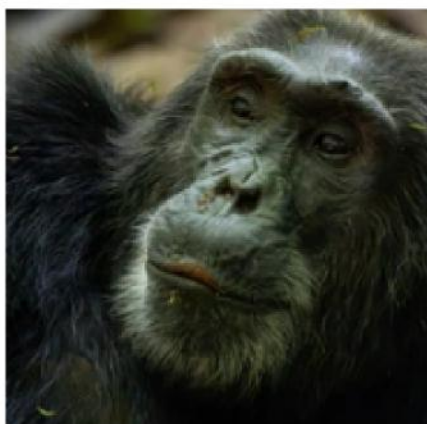
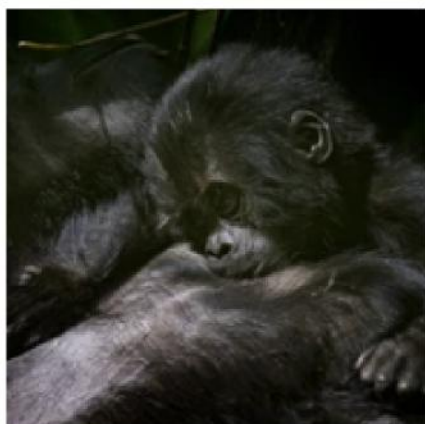
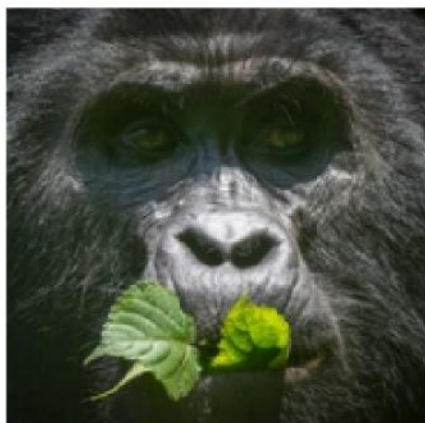
The bird world of Uganda holds countless new bird species as a treasure for us and we stand in amazement in front of the colorful feathered animals. Our tour takes you to the country's most exquisite national parks, where swamps, jungles and savannas have been protected from the productivity of the exploding population. The Entebbe Botanical Gardens, the forests of Bwindi, Kibale and Semuliki, the Kyambura Gorge, the savannahs of Queen Elisabeth and Murchison Falls National Park as well as Lake Mburo, Lake Albert and Lake Victoria enchant us as well as the Kazinga Canal and of course the various Sections of the young but already mighty Victoria Nile, which not only spoil us with great scenery.



Although the diversity of mammals seems very limited due to poaching during previous decades of Uganda's bloody history, we see some well-known and previously unknown animal species and over 200 bird species, so Manfred's camera is running hot.



What remains unforgettable are the hard-earned and thoroughly enjoyed encounters with gorillas and chimpanzees that we experienced after hours of strenuous jungle hikes with armed rangers - although we once failed to reach the chimpanzees despite our best efforts. We each spent some time very close to our close relatives, sitting perhaps three meters away from the gorillas while one of the chimpanzees walked right by my trouser leg. Breathtaking moments! (Not because of the mask we had to wear to protect the monkeys from possible pathogens that could endanger them.)



Guided and pampered

Our six-seater Land Cruiser, which becomes a safari vehicle with a lifting roof during the game drives, is first driven by Emmanuel, but due to disagreements he is replaced by Richard halfway through the tour. His explanations bring us closer to life in Uganda and show us that hot springs can also be used for cooking.



On various excursions we hike through muddy forests, bush or savanna with local guides in search of special birds, monkeys or rhinos. We can relax in a wide variety of lodges, some of which are the highlight of a stage, such as Lemala with its beautiful houses on a jungle island in the middle of the Nile Falls, or offer a special highlight, such as dinner in the Busch on the cliffs of Lake Albert, or the Gorilla Leisure Lodge, which is characterized by first-class food and service. We enjoy wonderfully relaxing massages several times.



Private Safari Uganda 2024[8052].pdf
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<https://www.bushbaby.info/post/uganda-perle-afrikas>

Variety and anticipation

It's great to be out and about again with the four of us, with Bea and Joe, enjoying, laughing and exchanging ideas about expectations and experiences. Uganda inspires us with its variety and beauty and we are excited to see what else there is to discover. Thanks Joe and Bea for organizing and being good company!



Now we're really looking forward to Bushbaby again, "no longer living out of a suitcase" and designing our own routes and daily routines. In the meantime, Bushbaby received a comprehensive 40,000 service from Lars and Martin in Johannesburg, where it was lubricated, cared for and looked after, so that everything was repaired, including the air conditioning, whose supply line was damaged by the vibration of the corrugated iron roads. Team Bushbaby is ready for new adventures.

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Explore Uganda with us in this, our monthly magazine, Pearl of Africa.



The Pearl is blessed with an undeniable natural beauty. In the west, the Rwenzori peaks reach towards the sky, the perfect challenge for bold explorers - Across the nation, parks are home to some of the world's most exotic animals: Silverbacks, lions and countless others, ooh... Uganda is home to Africa's big 5.



Winding roads lead to places of grand beauty and unique cultures for those who dare to explore. There's a story at every turn, especially from our people, who are renowned for their warmth and charm.



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BWINDI



Whew what a day. A day filled with so many experiences it's hard to put into words. How do I begin? We woke early to clear skies and the best view in the world. The excitement and anticipation of seeing the worlds greatest primates buzzed around at breakfast and everyone was on time.

The road to Gorilla lodge is beautiful and absolutely well worth the arrival. As its very high in the Bwindi Impenetrable Forest, and very close to the Gorilla experience, its to be expected to be a bit bumpy but that is part of being in Africa. And the arrival makes it all worth it. Celstine Masiga is the GM and was on hand to greet the group together with the smiling staff (everyone smiles in Uganda) and warm hot towels and a fabulous dinner prepared by a seasoned Chef of many years.





Our chalets were breathtaking and the view across the valley is something that you can consider unforgettable. I never closed my doors because it meant I could not see the sun rise or sun set. Its very close (2km) to the Gorilla experience and it means that after your vertical climb to see these incredible animals, you can return early enough to enjoy your chalet and all it has to offer. From the outside bath to the kingsize bed which has a hotwater bottle to warm those toes, from the large spacious bathroom and shower to the well appointed kitchen (I was booked into a villa), I didn't want to go home. The restaurant and lounge area is beautifully decorated and easy to have your meals and spend time on the spacious balcony bar.



In the dry months, there are sundowners on a hill nearby and an unforgettable moment. There are a million stars at night that can be seen from the Lodge. Not only do they work together with the community but they support them too. Buying local vegetables, supplying water from their 1 million litre tank to families near by, Most of the crafts sold in the craft shop in the lodge, are from the locals and those that are not made locally - they give 20% to the community. They use solar for sustainability and 90% of the staff is local. They have also been involved in the rehoming of the pygmy tribe called the Batour to ensure their survival. So when you book into this amazing lodge, you support an entire community. You can also fly into the local airport and there is a transfer that will collect you and return you to the airport. Definitely a lodge to return to on every possible occasion

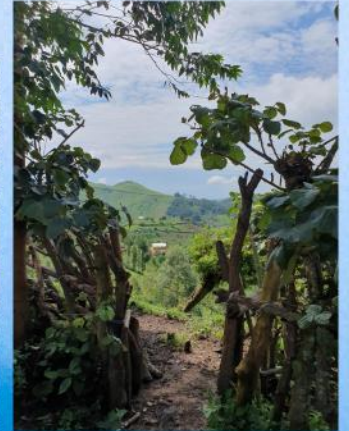


We left for the Gorilla Briefing centre and the local community of women dances out on a show for us which made us all smile. These women are amongst the hardest workers in Africa as they spend their days toiling in rain or shine in the terraces of the local mountains making sure there is food on the table and supplying the local lodges with fresh fruit and vegetables which must be back breaking. Yet here they were smiling and dancing and having the best time.



My hiking boots were ready and Ken made sure we each had a porter to carry our bags with gloves, water and raincoat (even though I think he carried me mostly). We set off to find the trail which would take us to see the Gorillas. What a walk. Before leaving home Ken suggested I walk a bit to get fit but I said I didn't need to! Was I wrong! Anyone planning to do this walk needs to be relatively fit let me tell you! It's not for the faint hearted or the couch potatoes or those who perch in front of computers all day (hmmmm wonder who that could be!). A walk up and down the mountain on the muddy slippery roadway eaten away by the heavy rains meant a 2 to 3 km distance before finding the pathway which would take us to the Gorillas.

We veered off the main road onto a mountain pathway no bigger than my shoe. And we went down the mountain. The roadway disappeared from sight and my poor porter and the group porter were both on hand to keep this hapless soul from falling. The others were nimble and found it not too difficult.



Gloves provided some protection from the thorns on the trees but not all. The high altitude made my breathing difficult and so as not to keep the group back, I took a decision to stop and make my way back up the mountain leaving Ken and the rest of the group to continue.

I made it back to the roadway with a guard and the porter who stuck by me helping me every step of the way. Amazing people these Ugandan people.

Our transport vehicle met me halfway to bring me back to the lodge where a warm shower and a bot water bottle awaited me. I will have to go home, get fit and start again! Both groups had incredible experiences with the Gorillas and managed to make it back despite the torrential rain. The photos of the Gorillas tell the story ...

I may have missed the highlight of our trip but for me the highlight has been Uganda as a country. Meeting the people and sharing their culture, hopes and dreams and if anything, although they have a hard life in the villages, their smiles and warmth should be a lesson to people around the world.





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EXPLORE
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THE PEARL OF AFRICA



BACKGROUND

The Culinary School Uganda is a specialized culinary institution in East Africa with its main offices and campus in Uganda, offering inspirational culinary arts courses. It also offers foods and beverages services in form of banquets, organic groceries, culinary literature and mouthwatering local and international cuisine catering services. All this is done at the hands of professional chefs trained to international standards. The School was founded by a renowned Chef, Henry Wanyama, a leading TV cookery show presenter, The Chef 'on NBS and 'Kitchen Delight' on NTV. Concerned with the influx of foreign expatriates in the hospitality sector in Uganda, and how employers preferred them to their indigenous counterparts, Chef Henry set out on a fact-finding study on the matter to enable him compare the training systems in other countries with ours, His major discovery was that there is a wide skills gap among Ugandans in the tourism and hospitality sector that has caused employers to prefer foreigners to the locals. In his quest to bridge up the gap, he traveled to different countries to understand how best to offer training that matches the market needs of the hospitality sector. After compiling all the knowledge and experiences he opened up a culinary institute to bridge this skills gap, and upon this background, the Culinary School began in 2016.

The
Culinary
School
Uganda

The Culinary School strikes a distinction in the ability to equip students with top-notch culinary skills, up-to-date TCSU has trained over 400 professional chefs who have gone on to be absorbed into the employment market as a specialized work force equipped with skills that have enabled them to compete favorably with the rest in top tourism and hospitality establishments in Uganda and abroad. This is achieved through hands-on training, local and international exposures through internships in different hospitality establishments in Uganda, France and India. Through different partnerships with the different organizations including Swiss Contact, we have empowered and skilled over 200 school dropouts both males and females in different parts of Uganda to support them create their businesses, get absorbed in the hospitality industry in their localities, and live a safe life. This was in a bid to solve unemployment amongst the youth which was driving most of them into early marriages, drug addiction, and prostitution



Chef Henry Wanyama

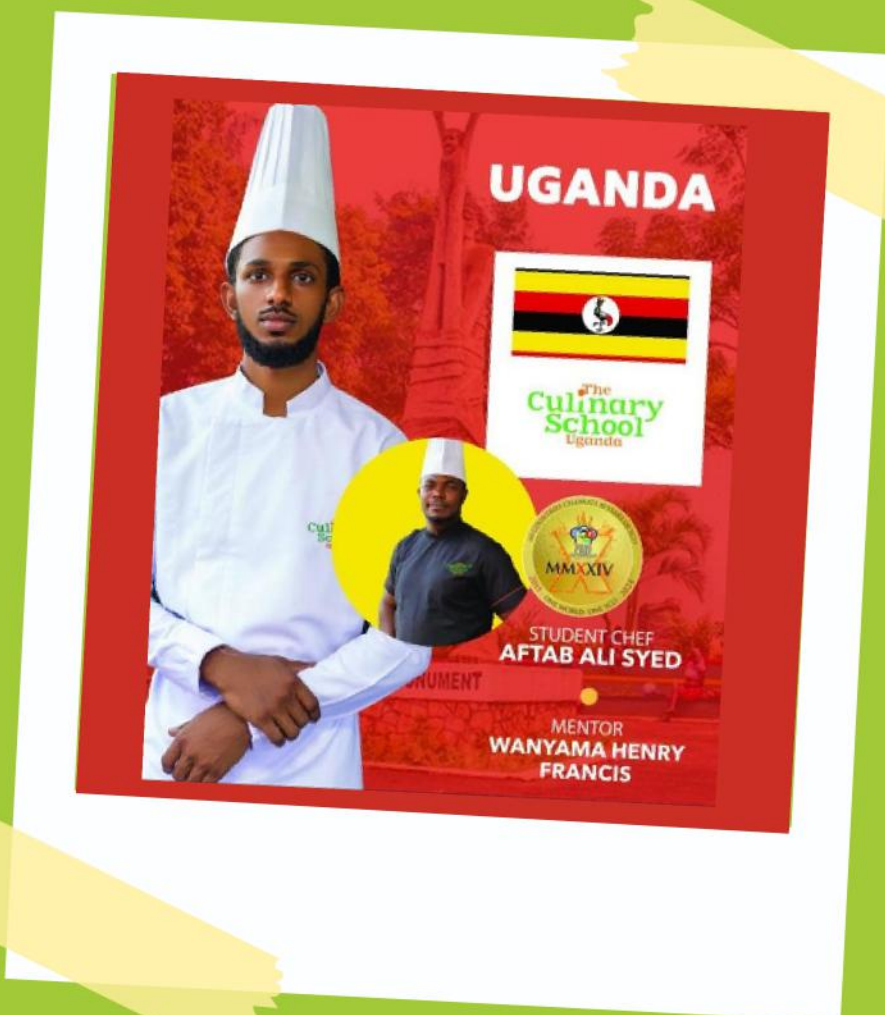
The Culinary School Uganda is a premier professional institute for culinarians in Uganda and Africa.

It was established in 2014 by the famous chef Henry Wanyama Francis who doubled as a host and presenter of the famous cook show KITCHEN DELIGHT on NTV and 'THE CHEF" on NBS Television.

TCSU is the culinary leader in offering educational resources, training, apprenticeship and programmatic accreditation, produces professional chefs. In addition, TCSU operates a fine dining restaurant, university cafeteria and offers banqueting services.

TCSU hosts international cooking competitions and promotes proper nutrition in children and sportsmen.

All TCSU services are designed to offer our students complete experiential knowledge and skill.



YOUNG CHEF OLYMPIAD

In a time plagued by polarization and division, the Young Chef Olympiad (YCO) emerges as a radiant symbol of optimism and unity. It is an entity that not only acknowledges the challenges and unrest that encircle us, but actively seeks to counteract it by celebrating the virtues of peace, harmony, and friendship.

With food as its chosen medium, the YCO masterfully crafts bridges that traverse cultural, social, and geographical boundaries. By embracing the culinary arts, it creates a common ground where people from different walks of life can connect, share, and learn from one another. This exchange of tastes, techniques, and traditions serves as a powerful catalyst for understanding, empathy, and collaboration.

In this world where shadows of despair and conflict often obscure our path, the YCO radiates as a beacon of hope. It offers a platform where young individuals can come together, not only to take part in the YCO Competition, but also to demonstrate to the world that they hold the key to a brighter future. Through their collaborations, they show that despite our differences, we all share a common destiny, and that destiny can be one of harmony, compassion, and coexistence.

The YCO embodies the essence of synergy, uniting diverse minds and skillsets to accomplish what no individual can achieve alone. Moreover, it serves as a hand of friendship, reaching out to all corners of the globe, regardless of language, race, or background. By extending its hospitality and open-mindedness, it paves the way for tolerance, understanding, and the dismantling of preconceived notions.

Ultimately, the YCO is a force that transcends boundaries and limitations. It stands at the forefront of a movement that strives to create a world where peace and friendship prevail. With every culinary creation and every connection fostered, it plants the seeds of hope and inspires a collective dream of a better, more harmonious future for all of humanity.



Young Chef Olympiad started with a vision of being the best platform to bring the world closer, via food as food unites people.


Thus, Dr. Suborno Bose, Chairman, YCO Global Council Co-chairman and CEO, International Hospitality Council Founder and Chief Mentor, Indismart Group YCO, took the initiative and kicked off Young Chef Olympiad in the year 2015 and rest is history!




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More than 25 years ago, in the introduction to the first edition of this guide, I wrote that Uganda's attractions 'tend towards the low-key'. Many years later, when I re-read this assertion for the first time in years, my initial reaction was - well - bemusement, unease, even embarrassment.

Introducing Uganda
The authors' take

Destination highlights
Kibale Forest
Nile rafting near Jinja
Sipi Falls

Eating and sleeping
Travel and visas

Gorilla tracking at Bwindi Impenetrable
National Park
Kidepo Valley National Park
Rwenzori Mountains

Health and safety
When and where to visit

Kampala
Murchison Falls
Semliki National Park

Ugandans as a whole – both those working within the tourist industry and the ordinary man or woman on the street – genuinely do come across as the most warm, friendly and relaxed hosts imaginable.

Uganda is one of our hot destinations for the year ahead – check out the full list of the best places to travel in 2024 [here](#).

What other country can match Uganda for sheer variety? Within a compact area of 241,000km² – almost exactly the same as United Kingdom – you'll find an unparalleled array of wildlife, scenery and cultures.

For Uganda is where east meets west in Africa. East African savannahs roamed by big game favourites merge with Congo-style rainforests bristling with primates (including mountain gorilla, golden monkey and chimpanzee) and birds (many associated with the Congo forests and found nowhere else in East Africa).

To these broad themes we can add local detail – wetlands, woodlands, mountains, and lakes of all sizes – to produce a mosaic of natural habitats that support, in total, 342 mammal species and 1,008 of bird.

Ugandan culture further reflects this diversity of landscapes; in the remote northeast you'll find lanky pastoralists tending their herds on the vast plains of Karamoja while in the mountainous west you'll meet stocky Bakiga and Bakonzo cultivating steep hillsides, and learn about traditional forest life from the diminutive Batwa Pygmies.

Authors' take



The northern plains of Queen Elizabeth National Park are potted with a series of magnificent volcanic calderas, each with its own microhabitat © Ariadne Van Zandbergen, Africa Image Library

Meeting the eyes of a mountain gorilla on the bamboo-clumped slopes of the Virungas? Rafting Grade 5 rapids on the Nile? Following a narrow rainforest trail awl with the heart-stopping pant-hoot chorusing of chimpanzees? Cruising the Kazinga Channel in the shadow of the Rwenzori while elephants drink from the nearby shore? Watching a prehistoric shoebill swoop down on a lungfish in the brooding reed beds of Mabamba Swamp? The roaring, spraying sensory overload that is standing on the tall rocks above Murchison Falls ... Low-key? Goodness me – short of landing on the moon, what exactly would I have classified as a must-do or must-see attraction when I wrote that line?

But as I flicked through that yellowing first edition, all 150 pages of it, my unease slowly dissipated. It had not, I realised, been a reflection of any significant change in my own perceptions during the intervening decades, but rather of the remarkable strides made by Uganda in general, and its tourist industry specifically.

Uganda has changed. And how! When I first visited in 1988, Uganda's economy, infrastructure and human spirit – every aspect of the country, really – were still tangibly shattered in the aftermath of a 15-year cycle of dictatorship and civil conflict that had claimed an estimated one million human lives. Come 1992, when I researched the first edition of this guide, Uganda was visibly on the mend, but, a steady trickle of backpackers aside, its tourist industry remained in the doldrums. Incredible as it seems today, there was no facility to track gorillas within Uganda in 1992, no white-water rafting, no realistic opportunity to get close to chimpanzees, and the likes of Queen Elizabeth and Murchison Falls national parks were practically void of game. Many other tourist sites that today seem well established either didn't exist in their present form, were off-limits or unknown to travellers, or were far less accessible than they are now.

Few visitors are unmoved by the magical hour spent in the presence of a group of mountain gorillas © Ariadne Van Zandbergen, Africa Image Library

Uganda today does not lack for accessible travel highlights. There is the opportunity to trek within metres of one of the world's last few hundred mountain gorillas, arguably the most exciting wildlife encounter Africa has to offer – though observing chimps in the Kibale or Budongo runs it a damn close second. There is the staggering recovery made by Uganda's premier savannah reserves, where these days one can be almost certain of encountering lions, elephants and buffaloes, etc. There are the Rwenzori and Mount Elgon, where one can explore East Africa's bizarre montane vegetation without the goal-oriented approach associated with ascents of mounts Kilimanjaro or Kenya. And there is Bujagali Falls, which – with its white-water rafting, kayaking and recently introduced bungee jump – is rapidly emerging as East Africa's answer to that more southerly 'adrenalin capital', Victoria Falls.



Whatever your area of interest, Uganda abounds in unforgettable activities and encounters. You can track chimpanzees and mountain gorillas in the depths of tropical forests; search for tree-climbing lions on the open Ishasha plains; descend into the hot depths of the Western Rift Valley in search of rare birdlife; fish for a record Nile Perch on the island-studded expanse of Lake Victoria; raft the turbulent headwaters of the Nile and marvel at the great river's eruption through a 6m canyon at Murchison Falls; visit a traditional homestead on the remote plains of Karamoja; and feel the chill of equatorial snow on the 5,100m Rwenzori Mountains.





Gorilla Lodge, Bwindi

Nor does Uganda lack for tourist facilities. As recently as ten years ago, international-class hotels and restaurants were all but non-existent outside the capital. Today, by contrast, practically every major attraction along the main tourist circuits is serviced by at least one luxury lodge and/or tented camp. Trunk roads have improved beyond recognition, as has the overall standard of local tour operators, public transport, budget accommodation, restaurants and service in general.

It should be noted, too, that the country's natural attractions far exceed the opportunity to see gorillas and lions and so on. Somebody once said that if you planted a walking stick overnight in the soil of Uganda, it would take root before the morning dawned. And it is certainly true that of all Africa's reasonably established safari destinations, Uganda is the most green, the most fertile – the most overwhelmingly tropical!

Uganda, in an ecological nutshell, is where the eastern savannah meets the West African jungle – and it really does offer visitors the best of both these fantastic worlds. In no other African destination can one see a comparable variety of primates with so little effort – not just the great apes, but also more than ten monkey species, as well as the tiny wide-eyed bushbaby and peculiar potto. And if Uganda will have primate enthusiasts wandering around with imbecile grins, it will have birdwatchers doing cartwheels. Uganda is by far the smallest of the four African countries in which more than 1,000 bird species have been recorded, and it is particularly rich in western rainforest specialists – in practical terms, undoubtedly the finest birdwatching destination in Africa.



Red-throated bee eaters Uganda by Ariadne Van Zandbergen

Red-throated bee eaters are just one of the many avian species found in Uganda © Ariadne Van Zandbergen, Africa Image Library

And yet for all that, Uganda does feel like a more intimate, unspoilt and – dare I say it? – low-key destination than its obvious peers. For starters, it has no semblance of a package tourist industry: group tours seldom exceed eight in number, and even the most popular game-viewing circuits retain a relatively untrammelled atmosphere. The country's plethora of forested national parks and reserves remain highly accessible to independent travellers and relatively affordable to those on a limited budget, as do such off-the-beaten-track gems as the Ssesse Islands, Katonga Wildlife Reserve, Sipi Falls and Ndali-Kasenda Crater Lakes.

Uganda has changed. A full 40 years after Idi Amin was booted into exile, and over three decades from when President Museveni took power, the country bears few obvious scars of what came before. Today, Uganda enjoys one of the healthiest reputations of any African country when it comes to crime directed at tourists. The level of day-to-day hassle faced by independent travellers is negligible. And Ugandans as a whole – both those working within the tourist industry and the ordinary man or woman on the street – genuinely do come across as the most warm, friendly and relaxed hosts imaginable.

It's been with growing pleasure that I've documented Uganda's progress, as a country and as a tourist destination, over the course of nine editions of this guidebook. And this progress is, I hope, reflected in the evolution of the book – from its backpacker-oriented earliest incarnation into this totally reworked and vastly expanded ninth edition, which provides thorough coverage of all aspects of the country for all tastes and budgets. But progress begets progress, and doubtless the next few years will see a host of new and exciting tourist developments in Uganda.



Author's story

Philip Briggs

My first visit to Uganda, in late 1988, was decidedly lacking in premeditation. I'd flown from London to Nairobi with broad thoughts of travelling through Tanzania to South Africa over a few months. But on my first night in town, I had a couple of beers with an enthused Canadian who'd just bussed back from Uganda, and was persuaded to revise my plans.

My memories of that first trip to Uganda reflect the decades of war and deprivation that had culminated in the coup of 1986. Bananas, bananas everywhere and nothing else to eat. Buses that took a day to cover 100km of violently pot-holed road. Heaped toilet bowls whose flush mechanism was habitually disused after years without running water. Buildings scarred with bullet holes. The pitiful war orphans who accosted me at every turn.

But there was also much to enjoy. I was enchanted by the verdant landscapes of the west, thrilled by a semi-successful gorilla track in what was then the Impenetrable Forest Reserve (heard them, could see where they were, never actually saw them – all in all, a reasonable return for an investment of US\$1), and felt a growing empathy with the guarded optimism, expressed by most of the Ugandans to whom I spoke, that the dark days just might be in the past.

And, with the notable exception of the civil war in the far north, so they were. By 1992, Uganda, once a byword for the worst malaises associated with post-independence Africa, was sufficiently stable for Bradt to commission me to research and write a guidebook to the country. Since then, it's been my privilege to watch and document Uganda as it embarked on one of the most staggering economic and political transformations of our time, to become, in the words of a recent Oxfam report, 'an inspirational economic success story, and a symbol of a more vibrant, successful Africa'.



UGANDA

Pearl of Africa



Uganda is a landlocked country in East Africa whose diverse landscape encompasses the snow-capped Rwenzori Mountains and immense Lake Victoria. Its abundant wildlife includes chimpanzees as well as rare birds. Remote Bwindi Impenetrable National Park is a renowned mountain gorilla sanctuary. Murchison Falls National Park in the northwest is known for its 43m-tall waterfall and wildlife such as hippos.



Where the great rivers meet



The official languages are English and Swahili. Uganda's official language is English, which is spoken by most educated Ugandans. The three major indigenous language families are Bantu, Central Sudanic, and Nilotic. Swahili and Luganda are also widely spoken.

Ugandan tourism is centered on the country's landscape and animals. It is a key source of employment, investment, and foreign cash, accounting for 4.9 trillion Ugandan shillings (US\$1.88 billion or €1.4 billion as of August 2013) in Uganda's GDP. Tourist attractions in Uganda include national game parks, game reserves, traditional sites, and natural tropical forests. Traditional occasions like Mbalu in eastern Uganda, boat riding, waterfalls etc.

Watch the trek to find the Gorillas of Bwindy

Uganda is a melting pot of different cultures and traditions. It was named the most diverse country on earth by a study from Harvard University. If you want to see the 'real' Uganda, you must incorporate cultural safaris or at the very least a visit to the local community, either for an overnight stay or a few hours to learn about their culture, participate in music and dance, or simply enjoy the food.





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Mirembe Racheal

Each month we feature 4 Tour Operators listed with the Association on of Uganda Tour Operators. To apply to be listed please email geniene@flipmagz.co.za

If you're planning a trip to Uganda, it's important to know the travel requirements before you go. Here's a comprehensive guide to help you prepare for your journey:

COVID-19 Requirements

Visa Requirements

Health Insurance

Currency

Culture and Etiquette

COVID-19 Requirements

UGANDA TRAVEL REQUIREMENTS



Uganda has been determined as a low-risk zone for Covid-19. Covid vaccines are not required, but recommended, especially in conjunction with other vaccines for the listed problematic diseases. The country has no official closure or lockdown in effect preventing travel due to Covid-19.

Travel details

- Passport
- Visa if not from visa-free country
- Yellow fever vaccine
- Ugandan Shilling (UGX), or USD, GBP or EUR cash for exchange
- You do not need to show a COVID vaccination certificate or negative COVID test to enter Uganda.

If you are symptomatic, it is advised to delay any travel plans until full recovery with negative tests. No testing is required before or after arrival in Uganda.

Visa requirements

Passport validity

If you are a resident in Uganda, your passport must be valid for 6 months from the date you arrive.

Check with your travel provider to make sure your passport and other travel documents meet their requirements.

Visas

Most foreign passport holders need a tourist or business visa to enter Uganda. Uganda has introduced an 'e-visas' system through which applications can be submitted and approved online in advance of travel.

VISA-EXEMPT COUNTRIES:

ANGOLA
ANTIGUA & BARBUDA
BAHAMAS
BARBADOS
BELIZE
BOTSWANA
BURUNDI
COMOROS
CYPRUS
ERITREA
ESWATINI
FIJI
GAMBIA
GHANA
GRENADA
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MALTA
MAURITIUS
RWANDA
SAINT VINCENT AND
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SEYCHELLES
SIERRA LEONE
SINGAPORE
SOLOMON ISLANDS
SOUTH SUDAN (6 MTS)
TANZANIA
TONGA
VANUATU
ZAMBIA
ZIMBABWE

Health insurance

When traveling to Uganda, it is crucial to prioritize your health and safety by obtaining comprehensive health insurance that covers any medical expenses incurred while abroad. While Uganda has made significant progress in healthcare, it's essential to be prepared for unexpected medical situations. Healthcare facilities in Uganda can vary in quality, and medical costs, especially for foreign nationals, can be significant. Having reliable health insurance ensures that you have access to necessary medical services without the burden of exorbitant expenses.

In the event of illness, accidents, or any medical emergency, having valid health insurance provides peace of mind and ensures that you can receive appropriate medical care without financial strain. Adequate coverage also includes medical evacuation, which may be necessary in severe cases that require specialized treatment available in neighboring countries.

Currency

Uganda's currency is the Ugandan Shilling (UGX). When traveling to Uganda, it is advisable to have some local currency on hand for daily expenses and transactions. The Ugandan Shilling is widely accepted throughout the country.

Exchanging foreign currency into Ugandan Shillings is relatively easy, and you can do so at banks, authorized Forex bureaus, and some hotels in major towns and cities. It's recommended to exchange your currency at official establishments to ensure fair rates and avoid counterfeit notes.

While the Ugandan Shilling is the primary currency, US Dollars are widely accepted in Uganda, especially in larger hotels, tour operators, and some tourist areas. It is advisable to carry small denomination US Dollar bills, preferably in good condition, as larger bills may not always be accepted, or you may receive a lower exchange rate for them.

Credit cards with Visa or Mastercard logos are generally accepted in larger hotels, restaurants, and major businesses in urban areas. However, it's important to note that smaller establishments, local markets, and rural areas may primarily operate on a cash-only basis. Therefore, it is recommended to carry some local currency for day-to-day expenses, especially when venturing into remote areas.

ATMs are widely available in major cities and towns, allowing you to withdraw cash in the local currency. Inform your bank in advance about your travel plans to ensure that your cards are authorized for use in Uganda. It's also advisable to carry a backup payment method, such as cash or a second card, in case of any issues with ATMs or card acceptance.

Culture and Etiquette

Uganda is a culturally diverse country with a rich heritage, and it is important to respect and appreciate local customs and traditions while visiting. Ugandans are generally friendly and welcoming, and showing an interest in their culture will be highly regarded.

When interacting with locals, it is customary to greet them with a handshake and use appropriate titles such as Mr., Mrs., or Doctor when addressing someone.





All international flights land at Entebbe International Airport
 International airlines: Turkish Airlines, Qatar Airways, KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, Emirates Airlines, Brussels Airlines, Fly Dubai, Hahn Air (Germany), APG Airlines (France)

Inter-Africa Airlines:Visas:

Uganda Airlines, Aerolink Uganda, Ethiopian Airlines, RwandAir, Kenya Airways, Airlink (South Africa), Tarco Aviation (Sudan)
 Easily available online US\$ 50

AFRICA MAP



UGANDA



EXPLORE

UGANDA

THE PEARL OF AFRICA

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