

Uganda

Uganda is Africa condensed, with the best of everything the continent has to offer packed into one small but stunning destination. Uganda is home to the highest mountain range in Africa, the Rwenzoris or Mountains of the Moon. It is the source of the mighty Nile, offering the best white-water rafting in the world. It has the highest concentration of primates on earth, including the majestic mountain gorilla, one of the rarest animals on the planet.

On top of all this, the scenery is so striking that it looks like an oil painting, the beautiful national parks see far fewer visitors than in neighbouring Kenya and Tanzania, and the capital, Kampala, is safer and friendlier than most in Africa. In 1907 pioneering tourist Winston Churchill called it the 'Pearl of Africa'. He was right.

Mention Uganda to most people today and the first thing they'll think of is the brutality of Idi Amin. Their naivety is their loss as, thankfully for Uganda, the big man died in exile in 2003. The reality is vastly different. Stability has returned to most parts of the country and tourists are welcomed with open arms. Despite the trials and tribulations of the past, Ugandans have weathered the storm remarkably well. The people offer heart-warming hospitality up and down the country, their ever-present smile accompanied by 'Hello Mzungu!'. They are truly some of the finest folk on the continent.

Take the plunge now, before the world wakes up to this magical microcosm of Africa.

FAST FACTS

- **Area** 236,580 sq km
- **ATMs** Kampala, Jinja, Mbale, Mbarara
- **Borders** Safe and accessible land borders with Kenya, Rwanda and Tanzania; risky land borders with Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)
- **Budget** US\$20 a day in town, US\$50 in parks
- **Capital** Kampala
- **Languages** English, Luganda
- **Money** Ugandan shilling; US\$1 = US\$1760
- **Population** 27.6 million
- **Seasons** Wet (March to May, October to November), dry (December to February, June to September)
- **Telephone** Country code ☎ 256; international access code ☎ 000
- **Time** GMT/UTC + 3
- **Visa** US\$30 for one month; issued at most borders



CAUTION: SECURITY IN NORTHERN UGANDA

The security situation in the north of Uganda is very bad, as rebels of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) continue their vicious attacks on villagers, refugee camps and public transport. At the time of writing it was unwise to visit Gulu and all points north and west, as rebels had been mounting attacks all over the region.

Even Murchison Falls National Park has seen occasional infiltration, and although this has been confined to remote areas, it tragically claimed the life of British resident Steve Willis in 2005. As a promoter and operator in the park, he would hate to think that his death caused visitors to desert the park he so loved. The Paraa section of the park is considered safe, although many embassies currently warn against visiting Murchison.

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Bwindi** (p804) Penetrate the Impenetrable Forest at Bwindi National Park to visit the mountain gorillas.
- **Jinja** (p813) Tame the waters at the source of the Nile, some of the world's best white-water rafting.
- **Murchison Falls** (p817) Check out the world's most powerful waterfall on a wildlife-watching trip up the Victoria Nile.
- **Lake Bunyonyi** (p810) Chill out at Uganda's most beautiful lake, a mythical landscape of terraced hillsides and hidden bays.
- **Rwenzori Mountains** (p808) Trek the mystical Mountains of the Moon, one of the continent's most challenging yet rewarding hikes.

CLIMATE & WHEN TO GO

Uganda can be visited at any time of year. Most of Uganda enjoys the perfect tropical climate. Temperatures average about 26°C during the day and 16°C at night. The hottest months are from December to February.

ITINERARIES

- **One Week** Kick off in Kampala (p798) and then head south to track the gorillas in Bwindi Impenetrable Forest (p804). After some hard hiking, chill out at Lake Bunyonyi (p810) for a few days before looping back to the capital.
- **Two Weeks** Cross over from Kenya and stop in Jinja (p813), the new adrenaline capital of East Africa. Tame the waters of the Nile (p815), bungee jump (p815) or quad bike (p815) before hitting Kampala (p798). Join the night shift in one of Africa's safest capitals. Head northeast to Murchison Falls National Park (p817), the best all-rounder in Uganda. Head

south to Fort Portal (p806), gateway to chilled-out crater lakes and the chimps of Kibale Forest (p807). Continue to Bwindi (p804) to meet the mountain gorillas and head on south to Rwanda or loop back to Kampala via the sublime Ssesse Islands (p812) if time allows.

HISTORY

Uganda experienced two great waves of migration. The first brought the Bantu-speaking peoples from further west in Africa, and the second, the Nilotic people from Sudan and Ethiopia. These broad families are still geographically split today, the Bantu in the centre and south of the country and the Nilotic peoples in the north. Until the 19th century, landlocked Uganda saw few outsiders compared with its neighbours. Despite fertile lands and surplus harvests, trading links with the great Indian Ocean ports were limited. During the reign of the Bugandan *kabaka* (king) Mwangi in the mid-19th century, contacts were finally made with Arab traders and early European explorers. Uganda was not to escape the tide of colonialism sweeping across the continent.

The British Arrive

After the Treaty of Berlin in 1890, when Europeans carved up Africa without consulting any Africans, Uganda, Kenya and Zanzibar were declared British protectorates in 1894. The Brits ruled indirectly, giving the traditional kingdoms a considerable degree of autonomy, but favoured the recruitment of Buganda people for their civil service.

Other tribal groups, unable to make inroads into the Buganda-dominated colonial administration or commercial sector, were forced to seek other avenues for advancement. The Acholi and Lango soon became dominant in the military. Thus were planted the seeds

for the intertribal conflicts that were to tear Uganda apart following independence.

Independence Time

By the mid-1950s a schoolteacher from the north, Dr Milton Obote, had cobbled together a loose coalition that led Uganda to independence in 1962, on the promise that the Buganda would have autonomy.

It wasn't the ideal time for Uganda to get to grips with independence. Civil wars were raging in neighbouring southern Sudan, Zaïre and Rwanda, and refugees poured into the country. It was soon obvious that Obote had no intention of sharing power with the *kabaka* (king). A confrontation was looming.

Obote moved fast, arresting several cabinet ministers and ordering his army chief of staff, Idi Amin, to storm the *kabaka's* palace. Obote became president, the Bugandan monarchy was abolished and Idi Amin's star was on the rise.

Enter Idi Amin

Amin staged a coup in January 1971 and so began Uganda's first reign of terror. All political activities were suspended, and the army was empowered to shoot on sight anyone suspected of opposition to the regime.

Over the next eight years an estimated 300,000 Ugandans lost their lives, often in horrifying ways. Amin's main targets were the educated classes, the Acholi and Lango tribespeople of Obote and the 70,000-strong Asian community. In 1972, Asians were given

HOW MUCH?

- **Tracking mountain gorillas** US\$375
- **Meal at decent restaurant** US\$10
- **National park entry** US\$25
- **New Vision newspaper** US\$0.50
- **White-water rafting** US\$95

LONELY PLANET INDEX

- **1L petrol** US\$1
- **1L bottled water** US\$0.50
- **Bottle of Bell beer** US\$1
- **Souvenir T-shirt** US\$10
- **Plate of matoke (mashed plantains) and beans** US\$0.40

90 days to leave the country; they departed with little more than the clothes they wore.

Meanwhile, the economy collapsed, infrastructure crumbled, prolific wildlife was slaughtered by soldiers and the tourism industry evaporated. The stream of refugees across the border became a flood, inflation hit 1000% and the treasury ran out of money to pay the soldiers.

Faced with a restless army, Amin had to seek a diversion. He chose war with Tanzania, ostensibly to teach that country a lesson for supporting anti-Amin dissidents. The Tanzanians defeated the Ugandan army and pushed on into the heart of Uganda in early 1979. Amin fled to Libya and later to Saudi Arabia, where he lived in exile until his death in 2003.

Obote Rides Again

The rejoicing in Uganda after Amin's downfall was short-lived. The 12,000 Tanzanian soldiers who remained in Uganda, supposedly to assist with the country's reconstruction and to maintain law and order, turned on the Ugandans as soon as their pay dried up.

Yusufu Lule and Godfrey Binaisa came and went as leaders, before Obote returned from exile in Tanzania to an enthusiastic welcome in many parts of the country. He swept to victory in an election that was, according to witnesses, blatantly rigged.

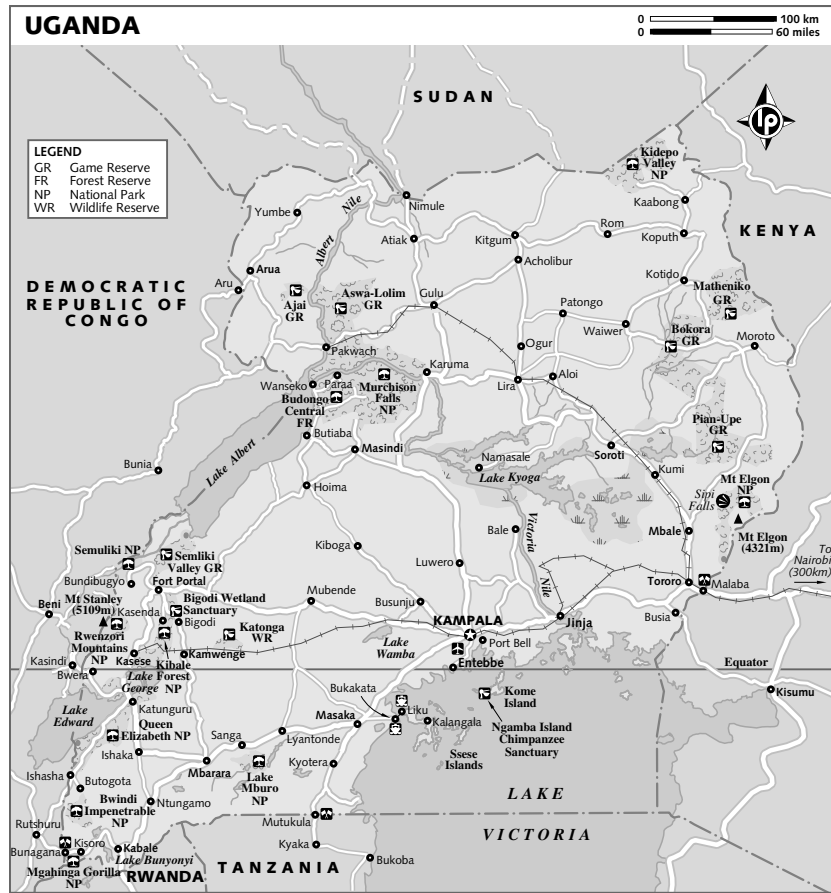
The honeymoon for Obote proved to be relatively short. Like Amin, Obote favoured certain tribes – his Lango and Acholi supporters from the north were given the top jobs – and the prisons began to fill once more.

Obote was about to complete the destruction that Amin had begun. More and more reports of atrocities leaked out of the country and several mass graves were discovered. In mid-1985 Obote was overthrown in a coup staged by the army under the leadership of Tito Okello.

A New Beginning

Shortly after Obote had become president for the second time, a guerrilla army launched a resistance struggle in western Uganda. It was led by Yoweri Museveni, who had lived in exile in Tanzania during Amin's reign.

In the early days, few gave the guerrillas, known as the National Resistance Army (NRA), much of a hope, but by the time of Okello's arrival, the NRA controlled a large slice of western Uganda. By January 1986 it



was clear that Okello's days were numbered. The NRA launched an all-out offensive and took Kampala.

Museveni proved to be a pragmatic leader, appointing a number of arch-conservatives to his cabinet, and making an effort to avoid the tribal nepotism that had divided the country. The economy took a turn for the better and aid and investment trickled into the country. Political parties were banned to avoid a polarisation along tribal lines once more, but anyone could join the National Resistance Movement (NRM).

Uganda Today

The debate about the formation of political parties has dominated the agenda in recent

years. Museveni shifted his position on a return to multiparty politics, and in July 2005 a referendum was held that overwhelmingly endorsed democracy. The fact that voter turnout was tiny suggested no-one was really that interested in the issue.

One issue they definitely were interested in was Museveni's move to scrap constitutional limits on presidential terms. Museveni himself put in place the two-term limit and promptly changed his mind as the end of his tenure drew closer. He was re-elected in 2006, but not before he had his opponent Dr Kizza Besigye muzzled and imprisoned on charges of treason and rape. Dr Besigye still took 41% of the vote. Long a darling of the donors, President Museveni's U-turn on a third term in office

has cast a cloud over his excellent record. Unflattering comparisons are being made with the Mugabes of this world and old friends are turning their back on Museveni. The world is watching to see what happens next.

The other dominant domestic concern has been the ongoing war against insurgents within the country. The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has been fighting a war in northern Uganda for two decades now and the mindless violence shows few signs of coming to an end despite ongoing peace efforts. The LRA's original aim was to establish a state based on the Ten Commandments, but given they have broken every commandment in the book, they seem to have forgotten their goal. Peace talks have been on and off again, but peace and the LRA seem a contradiction in terms.

Uganda has also been involved in conflicts beyond its borders, particularly in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). This turned into Africa's first cross-continental war. Old friends Rwanda and Uganda soon became enemies and backed rival factions in the bloody civil war. Both countries were accused of shamelessly plundering the DRC's mineral wealth and their international reputations took a tumble. Uganda finally pulled its troops out in 2002, but has yet to rebuild its former friendship with Rwanda.

Genuine political stability is possible only if the government can bring to an end the insurgent campaigns within its borders. If Uganda can negotiate a lasting peace with all its neighbours, that in turn should bring a rapid end to the capacity of rebel groups to destabilise the country.

CULTURE

Despite the years of terror and bloodshed, Ugandans are a remarkably positive and spirited people. Most Ugandans are keen debaters, discussing politics and personality in equal measure. They are opinionated and eloquent during disagreements, yet unflinchingly polite and engagingly warm.

Idi Amin, 'Big Daddy', the Last King of Scotland – call him what you will – casts a long shadow over Uganda both at home and abroad. Mention Uganda to the average person in the West and it's still sadly Idi Amin that is name checked first. His character has become the country's caricature, although for the majority of Ugandans he is no laughing matter.

Despite the evident progress in Uganda, it remains a country divided. Kampala and the south have experienced peace and prosperity for two decades, but Gulu and points north have been mired in an intractable cycle of violence. Kampala may have found peace, but Uganda has not, and the tribal politics of the past cannot be firmly laid to rest until the north and south experience peace and prosperity together.

Life in Uganda has been one long series of upheavals for the older generations, while the younger generations have benefited from the new-found stability. Many urban Ugandans are highly educated and informed, and love to engage visitors in conversations about impressions of Africa and the world beyond. Makerere University in Kampala remains one of the continent's great centres of learning, and its students often pack the dance floors at clubs in town.

One of the first countries to be struck by an HIV/AIDS outbreak of epidemic proportions, Uganda acted swiftly in promoting AIDS awareness nationwide and safe sex in society. This was very effective in radically reducing infection rates throughout the country.

Uganda is a spiritual society, and Catholicism and Protestantism have long been popular. However, evangelical Christianity has been making inroads. Abstinence is in, abortion out. Animism is big in rural Uganda, and often Christianity is interwoven with traditional beliefs. There is also a small minority of Muslims, including Amin, who converted to the faith to win financial support from Arab states in the 1970s.

Education has been a real priority in Uganda and President Museveni has been keen to promote free primary education for all. It's a noble goal, but to some extent Uganda lacks the resources to realise it.

Beyond the upwardly mobile urban areas, agriculture remains the single most important component of the Ugandan economy. Coffee, sugar, cotton and tea are the main export crops.

PEOPLE

Uganda might be a tiddler of a country by Africa's standards, but it's home to a kaleidoscopic range of tribes. The Buganda make up about 20% of Uganda's population and are predominant around Kampala; other tribes who have played a principal part in shaping the

country include the Lango, Acholi and Teso. The Karamojong, who inhabit the northeast, are cattle herders and rustlers, and they are viewed with fear and awe by most Ugandans. Pygmies live in the forests of the west.

There is a sizable community of Asians in Uganda, who first settled here during the days of the British Empire. Expelled by Idi Amin in 1971, they were reclaimed by President Museveni to return and reinvent their property, driving the Ugandan economy forward.

ARTS

The Last King of Scotland by Giles Foden (1998) is a must for every visitor planning a trip to Uganda. This bestseller chronicles the experience of Idi Amin's personal doctor, as he slowly finds himself becoming confidant to the dictator.

The Abyssinian Chronicles, by Ugandan-born Moses Isegawa (2001), tells the story of a young Ugandan coming of age during the turbulent years of Idi Amin and the civil war.

Chameleon is one of the most popular local artists, combining rap and traditional chanting in a cutting-edge combination. For more on music in Uganda, check out www.musicuganda.com.

Kampala is the best place to catch live music. Best of all is the jam session at the National Theatre every Monday – see p803 for more details.

The Ndere Troupe (p803), a group of dancers made up from a kaleidoscope of tribes in Uganda, perform traditional dances from every region of the country.

ENVIRONMENT

Uganda has everything from semidesert in the north to snow-covered mountains in the west. It has a lush landscape, thanks to Lake Victoria and the Victoria Nile River.

The tropical heat is tempered by the altitude, which averages more than 1000m. Much of Uganda is fairly flat, but there are sizeable mountains to the east (Mt Elgon) and the southwest (the Virunga volcanoes). The Rwenzori Mountains are the highest mountain range in Africa and Mt Stanley the highest peak in the country at 5109m, located in western Uganda on the border with the DRC.

Uganda is home to more than half the world's mountain gorilla population, a rich variety of other primates and a healthy population of most of the bigger African mammals.

Rhinos have been reintroduced, as they were utterly wiped out during the civil war.

There are more than a thousand species of bird in a country the size of Britain, making it one of the best birding destinations in the world. Favourites include the incredible shoebill stork and the crested crane, the national bird.

Uganda's national parks and reserves are well on their way back. There's less wildlife than in parks in Kenya and Tanzania, but there are also fewer travellers and the entry fees aren't bad compared with those of the bigger neighbours. Entry to Bwindi, Mgahinga, Murchison Falls and Queen Elizabeth National Parks costs US\$25 per person for the first day, US\$35 for two days and US\$50 for three days or more; Lake Mburo, Mt Elgon and Semuliki National Parks cost US\$20/25/30; and for all other protected areas it is US\$10 per day. Locally registered cars are US\$20,000 per visit, motorcycles US\$10,000. International Student Identity Card holders get a 25% discount on the entry fees.

With its relatively low population density and lower numbers of wildlife, Uganda lacks many of the environmental pressures faced by other countries in East Africa. The ecosystems of the national parks are generally in good shape, and conditions are ideal for wildlife populations to explode – not literally, there was enough of that in the bad old days.

FOOD & DRINK

Local food is pretty basic, usually involving *matoke* (mashed plantains) or *posho* (*ugali* or maize meal), but fish fans will enjoy the tilapia and Nile perch. Indian restaurants offer the best selection of vegetarian food beyond Kampala.

Popular local beers include light Bell and stronger Nile Special, and locally brewed Tusker and Castle are also available. A 500ml bottle costs around US\$2000 to US\$4000 depending on where you are drinking. Waragi is the local hard stuff, a little like gin, so it's best with a splash of tonic.

KAMPALA

☎ 041 / pop 1.2 million

Kampala is a compelling and confident city, the centre of political intrigue, commercial activity and intellectual excellence in Uganda. Today's forward-looking capital is vastly different from the battered city to which it was

reduced to in the 1980s. Modern buildings have sprung up all over the city, and old, dilapidated ones are slowly being renovated. But it's not only the buildings that are in better shape; there is a confidence about Kampala residents today that is infectious. Kampala cuts it.

ORIENTATION

Like Rome, Kampala is said to be built on seven hills. Nakasero Hill, encompassing the city centre, is where much of the action is. Between Nakasero and the lower part of the city is Kampala's main thoroughfare, Kampala Rd (which turns into Jinja Rd to the east and Bombo Rd to the west). Here you'll find banks, the main post office, lots of shops and a few hotels and restaurants. Below Kampala Rd are a hotchpotch of shops, markets, budget hotels and restaurants, and the bus station and taxi parks.

INFORMATION

For up-to-the-minute information on Kampala, grab a copy of the free magazine *The Eye*, which is available at hotels and restaurants around the city.

Bookshops

Aristoc (Map p802; 23 Kampala Rd) Overflowing with useful books and maps on Uganda, East Africa and beyond.

Internet Access

Email and internet services have sprung up all over town in recent years. Prices range from US\$2000 to US\$4000 per hour.

Web City Café (Map p802; Kimathi Ave) The biggest operation in town, with 30 terminals and a fast connection.

Medical Services

International Medical Centre (Map p802; ☎ 341291, emergency 077 741291; iclark@infocom.co.ug; ☎ 24hr) Opposite Hotel Equatoria, this clinic offers a wide range of professional medical services, including dependable malaria smears.

Surgery (Map p800; ☎ 256003, emergency 075 756003; stockley@imul.com; 2 Acacia Ave) Run by Dr Stockley, this highly reliable clinic stocks self-test malaria kits for those heading into remote areas for long periods.

Money

Kampala Rd and the streets parallel to it heading up the hill are where most of the banks and many foreign exchange bureaus are located.

Barclays Bank (Map p802; ☎ 230972; 16 Kampala Rd) Credit card cash advances of UK£500 per day; also good for small US dollar bills.

Centenary Rural Development Bank (Map p802; ☎ 251276; 7 Entebbe Rd) The place to organise a Western Union money transfer.

Crane Forex Bureau (Map p802; Speke Hotel, Nile Ave; ☎ 8.30am–8.30pm) Handy after-hours exchange service, plus good rates.

Standard Chartered Bank (Map p802; ☎ 258211; 5 Speke Rd) International ATMs available here, which dispense US\$400,000 per day.

Post & Telephone

Main post office (Map p802; cnr Kampala & Speke Rds; ☎ 8am–6pm Mon–Fri, to 2pm Sat) Offers postal and telecom services.

Tourist Information

Tourism Uganda (Map p802; ☎ 342196; www.visituganda.com; 15 Kimathi Ave; ☎ 8am–1pm & 2–5pm Mon–Fri, 8.30am–12.30pm Sat) The nerve centre of tourism promotion in Uganda, staff here are quite well informed.

Uganda Community Tourism Association (Ucota; ☎ 501866; ucota@africanline.co.ug; Kabalagala) Geared towards independent travellers, Ucota members operate a number of community camping grounds on the periphery of Uganda's national parks. It's southeast of the centre.

Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA; Map p800; ☎ 346287; www.uwa.or.ug; 7 Kira Rd; ☎ 8am–1pm & 2–5pm Mon–Fri, 9am–noon Sat) Looks after the country's national parks and protected areas. Near Uganda Museum.

Travel Agencies

Let's Go Travel (Map p800; ☎ 346667; www.letsgosafari.com; 1st fl, Garden City Complex) Part of a global empire.

Speedwing Travel Bureau (Map p802; ☎ 231052; rcm@infocom.co.ug; 1 Kimathi Ave) For airline tickets, this is a reliable stop for fair fares.

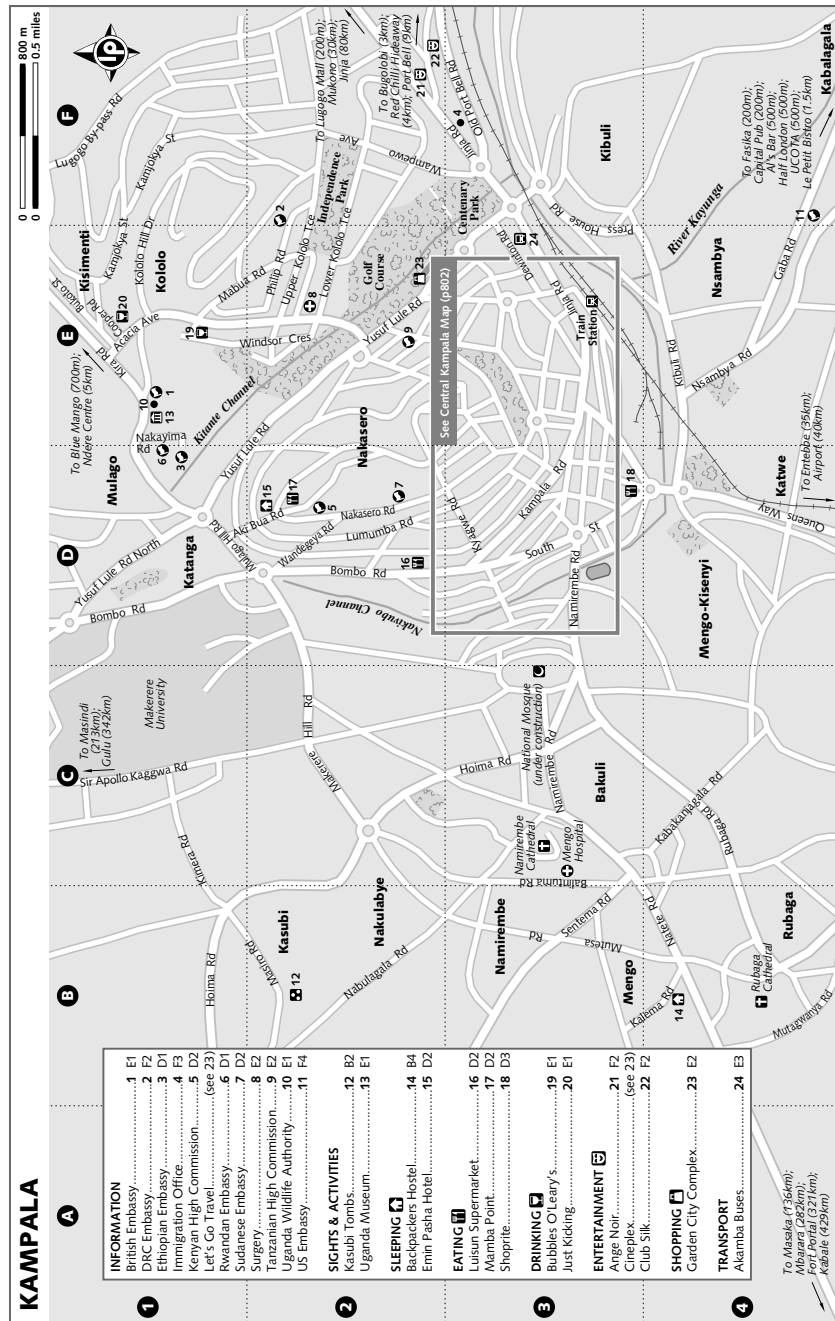
DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Kampala is a pretty safe city as far as capitals in Africa go. See p1104 for more on staying safe in Africa's biggest cities.

Beggars are a common sight in central Kampala, but they are not very persistent. However, if you do get harassed, try to be patient as there isn't much of a social security system in Uganda.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

The sights in Kampala are no great shakes compared with what's on offer in the rest of Uganda.



Trumpeted as the largest thatched mausoleum in Africa, the **Kasubi Tombs** (Ssekabaka's Tombs; Map p800; admission USh3000; ☎ 8am-6pm) are the huge traditional reed and bark-cloth buildings of the *kabakas* of the Buganda people. Sacred to Bugandans, to the uninitiated they are less inspiring. The tombs are on Kasubi Hill just off Masiro Rd; take a minibus taxi from the Old Taxi Park (ask for Hoima Rd).

Uganda Museum (Map p800; Kira Rd; admission USh3000; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Sat, to 3pm Sun) was probably worth a visit during its early years, but three decades of neglect make it one for museum addicts only.

Entebbe Botanical Gardens (admission USh1000) is a lush escape from the bustle of Kampala. Locals claim that some of the Johnny Weismuller *Tarzan* films were made here, but don't expect to find Cheetah cavorting in the trees. See p804 for details on getting to Entebbe.

Located just below the Imperial Botanical Beach Hotel in Entebbe, **Uganda Wildlife Education Centre** (☎ 320520; www.ugandawildlifecentre.com; admission USh10,000; ☎ 9am-6:30pm, last admission 5:30pm) is primarily a rescue centre. Star attractions include the first rhinos in Uganda since the war, several chimpanzees and shoebill storks.

If you just can't get enough of chimps, arrange a visit to the **Ngamba Island Chimpanzee Sanctuary**, a sanctuary located on an island in Lake Victoria. Nicknamed 'Chimp Island', it is a popular day trip from Kampala. The chimps here can be viewed during feeding times (11am and 3pm). **Wild Frontiers** (☎ 321479, 077-502155; www.wildfrontiers.co.ug) is the main booking agent. It costs US\$260 for the boat for up to four people and US\$65 per person for additional passengers, all including entry, and takes about one hour.

SLEEPING

Backpackers Hostel (Map p800; ☎ 077-430587; www.backpackers.co.ug; Natete Rd, Lunguja; camp sites USh5000, dm USh7000-10,000, d USh35,000-45,000, s/d without bathroom USh14,000/25,000; ☎) The original budget hostel in Kampala is still going strong. Set in huge grounds, it is an escape from the bustle of the city. There are some attractive *bandas* (thatched-roof huts) and some self-contained doubles with hot water. Tasty, inexpensive meals are available. There's also a pool table and affordable internet access. To get here, take a Natete minibus taxi from the New Taxi Park.

Red Chilli Hideaway (☎ 223903; www.redchillihideaway.com; camp sites USh6000, dm USh9000, tw from USh22,000, d from USh35,000; ☎) An oasis in the city, Red Chilli is a great spot that gets much of the overland truck business. It also has two-bedroom cottages which are good for a group. There is decent grub throughout the day and a lively bar. Plus free internet access! To get here, take a minibus from Kampala Rd to Bugolobi and get off at the Chilli sign.

Blue Mango (☎ 543481; www.bluemango-uganda.com; Old Kira Rd; dm US\$6, r US\$45-60, s/d without bathroom US\$20/25, cottages from US\$60-70; ☎) Looking for the atmosphere of a lodge in the city? Look no further, as this place has lush gardens, soft lighting and a swimming pool. All rooms are attractively decorated, although the cheapest have shared bathroom. Book ahead, as it is popular. The restaurant and bar here always draws a crowd.

Tourist Hotel (Map p802; ☎ 251471; www.touristhotel.net; Dastur St; s US\$25-30, d US\$35-40) This place offers high standards at midrange prices, making it good value. It overlooks the lively Nakasero Market and has executive-style rooms. Breakfast is an extra US\$5.

Speke Hotel (Map p802; ☎ 259221; www.spekehotel.com; Nile Ave; s/d US\$95/100; ☎) One of Kampala's oldest hotels, it was recently given a major face-lift to add creature comforts to age and grace. All rooms now have air-con, wooden floors, satellite TV and minibar.

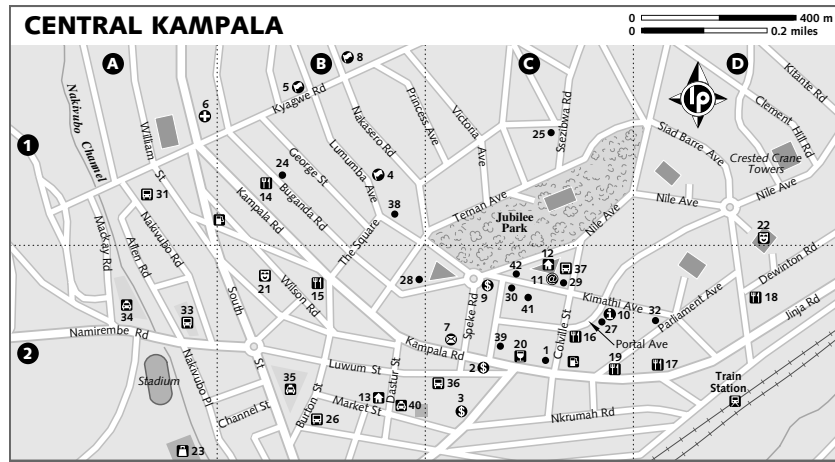
Emin Pasha Hotel (Map p800; ☎ 236977; www.eminpasha.com; 27 Aki Bua Rd; s/d from US\$220/250; ☎) Kampala's first boutique hotel is beautifully housed in an elegant old colonial property that has been thoughtfully restored. The 20 rooms are the best in the city, blending atmosphere and luxury.

EATING

Antonio's (Map p802; Kampala Rd; meals USh2000-4000) The best of the bunch, serving Indian, Mexican and Ugandan favourites at top speed. Curries and burritos are cheap, and portions are pretty large.

1000 Cups Coffee House (Map p802; 18 Buganda Rd; ☎ 8am-9pm) For a coffee kick from Brazil to Vietnam and everything in between, caffeine cravers should head here. There is also a menu of light bites and sweet pastries.

Fasika (☎ 268571; Gaba Rd; dishes USh5000-7000) One of the best Ethiopian restaurants in Kampala, it's just over the road from the crazy Capital Pub. The menu here includes



a tasty Ethiopian platter with a splatter of everything.

Masala Chaat House (Map p802; ☎ 255710; 3 Dewinton Rd) The number of Indians eating here says something about the authentic flavours. It serves a tasty *thali* (a traditional set meal) for US\$3.

Fang Fang (Map p802; ☎ 344806; Colville St; mains US\$5000-10,000) The consensus in the city is that this is the best Chinese restaurant, with a full selection of favourites, including fried crispy prawns with ginger and garlic.

Haandi (Map p802; ☎ 346283; www.haandi-restaurants.com; 7 Kampala Rd; curries from US\$7000) Home to some of the best curries in the world, seriously, this is a classy eatery that offers North Indian frontier cuisine. The tilapia (fish) curries are divine.

Le Petit Bistro (Gaba Rd; steaks from US\$8000) A must for steak-lovers, this little place that turns out mouth-watering meat at affordable prices. It can take two hours for food to arrive – be patient and let the drinks flow. It's southeast of the centre.

Mamba Point (Map p800; ☎ 077-243225; 22 Aki Bua Rd; mains US\$15,000-30,000; ☎ Mon-Sat) For the best in Italian dining, make for Mamba Point, where the pasta is home-made and the menu as close to the homeland as you might hope to find in Africa.

Some of the cheapest places to eat in Kampala are the ubiquitous takeaways that dot the city centre, offering such dishes as chicken, meat, sausages, fish and chips, as well as samosas and chapatis. Prices range from US\$1500

to US\$3000 for a meal, but know that grease features heavily in every dish. For a quick fix, **Nando's** (Map p802; Kampala Rd) and **Chicken Inn** (Map p802; Kampala Rd), both in the same building, turn out chicken in every size and shape at reasonable prices (US\$4000 to US\$8000). **Vasili's Bakery** (Map p802; Kampala Rd), located in the same strip, serves the best range of pies and real cakes in the city.

Many of the markets around the city have local food stalls. For US\$1000, they usually offer a heaped plate of *matoke*, Irish potatoes, groundnut sauce, beans, greens and meat or fish.

Self-caterers should head to **Shoprite** (Map p800; Clocktower Roundabout), a huge supermarket with goodies galore, and **Luisin Supermarket** (Map p800; 11 Bombo Rd), an Italian delicatessen is crammed to the ceiling with cheeses, salamis, and home-made cakes and biscuits.

DRINKING

Kampala rocks. The nightlife is something to relish, with a host of decent bars and clubs throughout the city. Friday and Saturday are the big nights out.

All of the most popular places to stay have bars: Red Chili is pretty busy and attracts a few regular expats, as well as travellers; the lively Backpackers has a leafy garden and a popular pool table; and Blue Mango is the place to be on weekends, when the bar steps it up a gear. The Speke Hotel has a popular terrace bar out the front, as well as the raucous Rock Garden.

INFORMATION		EATING		AIR TANZANIA	
Aristoc.....	1 C2	1000 Cups Coffee House.....	14 B1	British Airways.....	25 C1
Barclays Bank.....	2 C2	Antonio's.....	15 B2	Busscar.....	26 B2
Belgian Embassy.....	(see 38)	Chicken Inn.....	(see 19)	Eagle Air.....	27 C2
Centenary Rural Development Bank.....	3 C2	Fang Fang.....	16 C2	Egypt Air.....	28 B2
Crane Forex Bureau.....	(see 12)	Haandi.....	17 D2	Emirates.....	29 C2
Danish Embassy.....	4 B1	Masala Chaat House.....	18 D2	Ethiopian Airlines.....	30 C2
Dutch Embassy.....	(see 38)	Nando's.....	19 C2	Gulf Air.....	(see 30)
French Embassy.....	5 B1	Vasili's Bakery.....	(see 19)	Jaguar Executive Coaches.....	31 A1
International Medical Centre.....	6 A1	Kenya Airways.....	32 D2	KLM.....	(see 32)
Main Post Office.....	7 C2	Slow Boat Pub.....	20 C2	Main Bus Station.....	33 A2
South African High Commission.....	8 B1	ENTERTAINMENT		New Taxi Park.....	34 A2
Speedwing Travel Bureau.....	(see 30)	Cineplex.....	21 B2	Old Taxi Park.....	35 B2
Standard Chartered Bank.....	9 C2	Musicians Club 1989.....	(see 22)	Post Buses.....	(see 7)
Tourism Uganda.....	10 C2	National Theatre.....	22 D1	Regional Coach.....	36 C2
Web City Café.....	11 C2	SHOPPING		Scandinavian Express.....	37 C2
Western Union.....	(see 3)	Exposure Africa.....	(see 24)	SN Brussels Airline.....	38 B1
SLEEPING		Owino Market.....	23 A2	South African Airways.....	39 C2
Speke Hotel.....	12 C2	TRANSPORT		Special Hire Taxis.....	40 B2
Tourist Hotel.....	13 B2	Afritours & Travel.....	24 B1	Sudan Airways.....	41 C2
		Air Burundi.....	(see 37)	United Airlines.....	42 C2

Slow Boat Pub (Map p802; ☎ 255647; Kampala Rd) This is much more of a local drinkers' bar than the location might suggest. Hang out for an afternoon session and watch Kampala life go by.

Rock Garden (Map p802; Speke Hotel) One of the definitive stops on the Kampala nightshift, this place is heaving with people from 9pm. Prostitutes hang out here in numbers and pickpocketing is not unheard of on a busy night.

Just Kicking (Map p800; Cooper Rd) The top sports bar in Kampala that helped make Kisiminti the kickin' place it is today. A sign above the front door reads: 'No hookers. Props and locks welcome.' Well, that's the idea, anyway.

Bubbles O'Learys (Map p800; ☎ 031-263815; 30 Windsor (Res) Kampala's contribution to the growing legion of Irish pubs, Bubbles O'Learys is one of the more authentic offerings. This is the 'in' place to be on a Friday and draws a big crowd.

Gaba Rd in Kabalagala, southeast of the centre, is another popular late-night scene. **Al's Bar** (Gaba Rd) is legendary in Kampala, although notorious might be a better word. You are guaranteed to find some people propping up the bar into the daylight hours of the next morning. Right next door is the **Half London** (Gaba Rd), one of the most famous addresses in Kampala for live music from Thursday to Saturday.

ENTERTAINMENT

Musicians Club 1989 (Map p802; National Theatre, Said Barre Ave; admission free; ☎ 7-10pm Mon) Kampala musicians get together every Monday at the National Theatre for informal jam sessions and live performances. This is a must if you are in the city.

Those with their dancing shoes can head to **Ange Noir** (Map p800; admission US\$2000-10,000; ☎ 9pm-5am) or **Club Silk** (Map p800; admission US\$2000-10,000; ☎ 9pm-5am), both just off Jinja Rd in the industrial area of town. These are the spots to meet the local movers and shakers.

The Ndere Troupe is composed of members of the many ethnic groups in Uganda and has a new base in Ntinda, the **Ndere Centre** (☎ 288123; www.ndere.com; Kisaasi Rd). Dance performances take place every Sunday at 6pm and cost just US\$3000.

The leading cinema group in Uganda is **Cineplex** (US\$11,000; Wilson Rd Map p802; Garden City Complex Map p800).

SHOPPING

Owino Market (Map p802) is a good spot to sniff around. It has an enormous selection of second-hand clothes and a maze of stalls selling everything but the kitchen sink – not very easy to fit in a backpack anyway. Craft shopping is less of a pull than in Kenya or southern Africa, but for the best browsing, try **Exposure Africa** (Map p802; 13 Buganda Rd).

There are two big shopping centres in the city. **Garden City Complex** (Map p800; Yusuf Lule Rd) has several floors of shops, plus a cinema, bowling alley and food court. The newer **Lugogo Mall** (Jinja Rd), northeast of the centre, includes a Barclays Bank, and Game, a huge DIY and household shop from South Africa.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

For details of the airlines flying in and out of Entebbe International Airport, see p820.

Both **Eagle Air** (Map p802; ☎ 344292; www.eagleuganda.com; 11 Portal Ave) and **United Airlines** (Map p802; ☎ 349841; Kimathi Ave), no relation, offer domestic flights to far-flung towns in the north, such as Arua, Gulu and Moroto.

Boat

See p821 for information about Tanzania Railways ferry services between Port Bell, near Kampala, and Mwanza (Tanzania).

Bus

Well-founded rumours suggest that the bus station and taxi parks will be shifted to the outskirts of the city during the lifetime of this book. From the current chaotic bus station (Map p802) between Allen and Nakivubo Rds, buses go in all directions all over Uganda. Popular destinations include Fort Portal (US\$10,000, five hours), Jinja (US\$4000, 1½ hours), Kabale (US\$15,000, six hours), Masaka (US\$5000, two hours), Masindi (US\$9000, 3½ hours) and Mbale (US\$10,000, three hours).

Post buses depart at 8am daily, except Sunday, from the **main post office** (Map p802; ☎ 236436; 35 Kampala Rd) for Kabale (US\$11,000, six hours), Fort Portal (US\$10,000, 10 hours), Kasese

(US\$11,000, eight hours) and other major destinations.

For details on international bus services to Kenya and Rwanda, see p821 and p821.

Kampala has two parks for minibus taxis: the Old Taxi Park (Map p802), on the triangle formed by Burton, Luwum and South Sts, which serves all parts of the city and country to the east; and the New Taxi Park (Map p802), on the corner of Mackay and Namirembe Rds, which serves destinations to the west and north. Prices for minibus taxis are about the same as the buses, but they tend to be a bit slower.

GETTING AROUND

Entebbe International Airport is 35km from Kampala. From the Old Taxi Park, minibus taxis travel between Kampala and Entebbe town (US\$2000), connecting with minibus shuttles to the airport (US\$500). A private taxi from the airport to Kampala costs about US\$20; it's a little cheaper to get out to the airport.

The ubiquitous white minibus taxis for trips around Kampala mostly leave from the Old Taxi Park. To find the minibus taxi you want, simply ask around – people are generally very helpful. However, double-decker buses will soon be introduced, and the minibuses banned from the city centre. Private taxis are unmetered and start from US\$5000 for trips in the centre, more at night or into the suburbs. *Boda-bodas* (motorcycle taxis) charge US\$1500 around the city centre.

WESTERN UGANDA

BWINDI IMPENETRABLE NATIONAL PARK

Bwindi National Park (331 sq km), aka the Impenetrable Forest, is home to half of the world's known mountain gorillas, about 330 of them – there's just one Bwindi gorilla for every 20 million people! Penetrating the Impenetrable Forest is no picnic, as the terrain is steep and the foliage unforgiving, but what a reward. All the hardships are forgotten in an instant with the first glimpse of the gorillas in their mountain kingdom. No bars, no cars – this is not a safari park but their world, and we are their privileged guests. Seeing the gorillas is one of Africa's most memorable experiences: don't miss it.

Deep in the southwest of Uganda, the park is real rainforest and it rains a hell of a lot, so come prepared.

Activities

If US\$375 to track gorillas makes you want to cry, or you've got some extra time, try a nature walk around parts of Bwindi forest to enjoy the birdlife, flora and other wildlife (perhaps chimps – but not gorillas). These guided walks cost US\$5/10 per person for a half-/full day.

Sleeping & Eating

There are far more beds than gorilla permits available in Bwindi, but prices are higher than elsewhere in Uganda.

Buhoma Community Rest Camp (camp sites US\$3, bandas per person US\$10) In a beautiful setting right next to park headquarters, this is the most popular budget deal at Bwindi. All profits go towards funding community-development

projects. *Bandas* come in a variety of shapes and sizes. There is also a small canteen and bar here.

Volcanoes Safaris (☎ 041-346464; www.volcanoesafaris.com; s/d full board US\$240/360) For a dramatic setting this camp is hard to beat, situated opposite the wall of green that is the Impenetrable Forest. Accommodation is in luxury *bandas* and rates include meals and drinks.

Gorilla Forest Camp (☎ 041-340290; www.sanctuarylodges.com; full board per person US\$250) Run by the bespoke travel company Abercrombie & Kent, this is the ultimate jungle camp, offering opulent tents complete with grand beds, luxury bathrooms and forest views.

Some travellers end up spending a night in nearby Butogota before walking to the park headquarters at Buhoma the next day. **Butogota Travellers Inn** (s/d US\$20,000/30,000) has become a little ambitious with its pricing, so make for **Pineapple Lodge** (s/d US\$6000/8000) – it's more basic, but has a *basic* grasp of room pricing.

TRACKING GORILLAS

The chances of encountering gorillas are excellent, but the time spent with them is limited to exactly one hour. Only eight people can visit each of the four habituated gorilla groups, so the demand for places often exceeds supply; head for Rwanda or the DRC if the waiting list is too long. All bookings should be made in advance through the UWA office in Kampala (see p799). There are sometimes no vacancies for months, so it might be necessary to shop around for tour operators or hostels. If you just turn up at the park headquarters at Buhoma, and you're willing to hang around a few days, there might be last-minute cancellations – but there are absolutely no guarantees.

The cost of a permit to track gorillas is US\$375 per person, including the park entry fee.

Rules of Engagement

Before meeting the mountain dwellers of East Africa, all visitors must observe the following gorilla etiquette:

- Anyone with any illness cannot track the gorillas. Shared biology means shared diseases. There's a full refund for those who are unwell.
- Eating and smoking anywhere near the gorillas is forbidden – they might take up the habit.
- Flash photography is another no-no – turn the autoflash off or you'll be mighty unpopular with both rangers and gorillas!

Also, remember:

- Speak quietly, and don't point at the gorillas – they might become paranoid.
- Leave *nothing* in the park; take out everything you bring in.
- Stay very close together, with the guide. Keep a few metres away from the gorillas.

And finally:

- As hard as it seems to stand still when faced by two tonnes of charging silverback, *never ever run away*...crouch down until he cools off.

RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL

There used to be regular reports of illegal gorilla tracking in Uganda. When permits are selling like hot cakes, tourists have been known to cut corners by bribing rangers into multiple visits each day. This is not only illegal but also potentially life threatening for the gorillas: it increases their stress levels, which in turn decreases their resistance to disease. Do not attempt to track illegally as you will be contributing to the demise of the highly endangered mountain gorilla.

Getting There & Away

A direct Silverline bus travels every day in each direction between Kampala and Butogota (US\$18,000, 12 hours), usually departing very early. Check at the bus station the day before.

Irregular pick-ups and minibus taxis connect Kabale with Butogota (US\$9000, about three hours) on Tuesday and Friday, but other days are a nightmare.

From Butogota to the park headquarters at Buhoma (17km), public transport is scarce, but is most likely to run in either direction on market day (Thursday). Pick-ups (US\$25,000) or motorcycles (US\$10,000) can be chartered, which is money well spent to avoid a night in Butogota or a 17km walk.

FORT PORTAL

☎ 0493

There may be no fort, but this is definitely a portal to places that offer sublime scenery, abundant nature and genuine adventures. Explore the beautiful crater lakes in the area, track the chimpanzees in Kibale Forest National Park and drop down into the Semliki Valley, with its wildlife, hot springs and Pygmy villages.

The town of Fort Portal is lush and liveable, and one of the nicer urban centres in Uganda. Located at the northeastern end of the Rwenzori Mountains, it is the heartland of a verdant tea-growing area.

Information

Kabarole Tours (☎ 22183; ktours@infocom.co.ug; ☎ 8am–6pm) A reliable local tour operator located just off the main roundabout in town. Tour prices are high for just one or two people, so gather a group to share the cost. Nearby national parks, plus affordable mintreks into the foothills of the Rwenzoris.

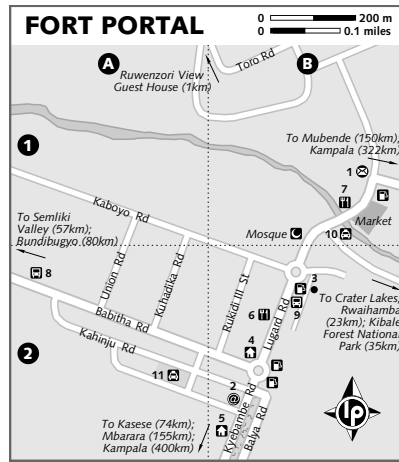
Post office (Lugard Rd)

Rafisa Info-Services (Kyeabambe Rd; per min US\$50) The best internet connection in town.

Sleeping & Eating

Most people only pass through Fort, heading to the crater lakes or nearby national parks where a good range of accommodation awaits.

Continental Hotel (☎ 077-484842; Lugard Rd; d US\$20,000, s/d without bathroom US\$8000/10,000) It is not ageing as gracefully as some, but it remains the best of the cheaper places. It offers clean rooms around a courtyard and has a small restaurant.



Rwenzori Travellers Inn (☎ 077-500273; Kyeabambe Rd; s/d US\$25,000/35,000) A modern hotel in the centre of town, rooms here are clean and include hot-water bathrooms. Downstairs is one of the best restaurants in town and a lively local bar.

Rwenzori View Guest House (☎ 22102; ruwview@africaonline.co.ug; s/d incl breakfast US\$42,000/55,000) A blissful little guesthouse on the outskirts of town, Rwenzori View offers spectacular outlooks of the mountains. There are also some cheaper rooms available with shared bathroom.

Gardens (☎ 22925; Lugard Rd; meals US\$2-4) One of the best restaurants in town. It serves some good Indian staples, including a filling vegetable curry, and all of the *mochomo* (barbecued meat) you could imagine and some you perhaps couldn't.

Self-caterers heading to Kibale Forest or the crater lakes should check out **Andrew Brothers Stores** (Lugard Rd), a little supermarket with plenty of products for the provinces.

Getting There & Away

From the taxi park on Kahinja Rd, there are frequent departures to Kasese (US\$5000, two hours), among other places. **Kalita Transport** (☎ 077-590067; 14 Lugard Rd) has regular services to Kampala (US\$10,000, four hours). From the bus station on Babitha Rd, a daily bus runs to Kabale (US\$15,000, eight hours) via Kasese and Mbarara. The post bus leaves for Kampala daily (except Sunday) at 6.30am from the post office on Lugard Rd.

INFORMATION	
Post Office.....	1 B1
Rafisa Info-Services.....	2 B2
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES	
Kabarole Tours.....	3 B2
SLEEPING	
Continental Hotel.....	4 B2
Rwenzori Travellers Inn.....	5 B2
EATING	
Andrew Brothers Stores.....	6 B2
Gardens.....	7 B1
TRANSPORT	
Bus Station.....	8 A2
Kalita Transport.....	9 B2
Minibus Taxis to Kamwenge & Rwaihamba.....	10 B1
Taxi Park.....	11 A2

To Kamwenge (for Kibale Forest National Park) and Kasenda or Rwaihamba (for Lake Nkuruba), minibus taxis leave from near the bridge on Lugard Rd.

LAKE NKURUBA

The winner among the many contenders for title of most beautiful crater lake, this is still surrounded entirely by dense tropical forest. Lake Nkuruba, 25km south of Fort Portal, is excellent for swimming and hiking.

Lake Nkuruba Community Camp Site (☎ 077-814327; dm/lakeside cottage US\$10,000/25,000, camp sites US\$5000) Everyone loves this place. Facilities are basic, but the staff here are very friendly and the setting is perfect for a few days of relaxation. Filling meals (US\$5000) are served and basic supplies are available in nearby Rwaihamba. Bicycles are available for US\$5000.

Minibus taxis that travel from Fort Portal to Kasenda and Rwaihamba (there are plenty on Monday and Thursday) pass Lake Nkuruba (US\$2000, 45 minutes). The lake is signposted on the left just before Rwaihamba.

KIBALE FOREST NATIONAL PARK

The chimpanzees are the stars at Kibale. There are hundreds and hundreds here, plus great herds of monkeys, giving this small national park (admission 1/2/3 or more days US\$20/30/50) one of the highest primate population densities in the world. It's not as strenuous as tracking the gorillas, but you don't get as up close and personal either. The chimps tend to keep a safe distance in the tall trees, chomping on fruit and defecating at will, but it's still a fascinating experience for the uninitiated. An

excitable chimp makes mountain gorillas look decidedly shy.

From the park headquarters at Kanyanchu, guided walks in search of the chimps (3km to 5km, two to four hours) can be arranged along well-marked tracks. The walks start at 8am (the better time) and 3pm and cost a hefty US\$70 per person, plus park fees, making Murchison Falls National Park (p817) the better value place to track chimps these days.

BIGODI WETLAND SANCTUARY

A cheaper pursuit is the Bigodi Wetland Sanctuary, a community tourism project established to protect the Magombe Swamp, a haven for 137 bird species. Guided walks (US\$10,000) depart from the visitors centre on demand and take three hours. The sanctuary is just off the road between Fort Portal and Kamwenge, about 6km southeast of Kanyanchu.

Sleeping & Eating

Safari Hotel (camp sites US\$6000, bandas per person US\$8000) A cheerful little spot in Nkingo village, about 6km from the park headquarters towards Bigodi village. Very basic, but a warm welcome is assured. Good food.

Kanyanchu Park Headquarters (camp sites per person US\$10,000, s/d banda US\$20,000/30,000) In the heart of things, this place has smart *bandas*, a 'sky' tree house and tasty food supplied by a local women's group.

John Tinka's Homestay (☎ 077-886865; homestay US\$30,000) Homestays are a new community tourism activity in Uganda. Stay with John Tinka's family in Bigodi village for the genuine Uganda experience. Rates include all meals.

Getting There & Away

Minibus taxis travelling from Fort Portal to Kamwenge pass the park headquarters at Kanyanchu (US\$3000, 45 minutes) and Bigodi (US\$4000, one hour)

SEMULIKI NATIONAL PARK

Semuliki is part of the vast Ituri forest, where the steaming jungle of the DRC collides with the higher plateau that is Uganda. The main attractions of Semuliki are the **hot springs** near Sempaya and the (commercialised) **Pygmy villages** near the village of Ntandi, a few kilometres before Bundibugyo. The best part of any trip around the park, however, is the magnificent views over the rainforest and savannah of the Semuliki Valley and DRC beyond.

At the park headquarters at Ntandi, there are **camp sites** (camp sites USh10,000). There are also two **bandas** at **Mpora Rural Family** (☎ 0493-22636; mmorence@yahoo.com; banda per person US\$10), a home-stay near Kichwamba Technical College. The money funds a local orphanage.

Minibus taxis travel between Fort Portal and Bundibugyo and can drop passengers at Ntandi. Otherwise, charter a vehicle with a driver from Fort Portal, rent a motorcycle or take an excursion offered by Kabarole Tours (p806).

KASESE

☎ 0483

Kasese is the uninspiring base for an epic adventure in the Rwenzori Mountains. Otherwise forget it, as it is a hot and dusty boom-and-bust town.

Information

Centenary Rural Development Bank (Portal Rd)

Represents Western Union for those that suddenly decide they must conquer the mountains but lack the US\$567 required.

Rwenzori Mountaineering Services (RMS;

☎ 44936, 078-325431; rwenzorims@yahoo.co.uk; PO Box 33, Kasese) Located beneath the Saad Hotel, this is the information and booking office (open daily) for trekking or climbing the Rwenzoris (right).

Rwenzori National Park Office (Rwenzori Rd) More information on climbing the mountains. Most punters pay their fees in advance at the UWA headquarters in Kampala (see p799), but it is also possible to pay here.

Sleeping & Eating

Ataco Holiday Inn (Stanley St; s/d USh7000/11,000) Clearly not part of the Holiday Inn hotel chain, but it is a clean and affordable option.

Saad Hotel (☎ 44139; Rwenzori Rd; r in old/new wing USh17,000/27,000; 🍷) The original travellers' hang-out for those venturing into the Rwenzoris; the new wing is worth the extra if only for the carpets. There's a good restaurant but no alcohol!

Mariana Hotel (☎ 077-493414; 17 Stanley St; s/d USh17,500/35,000) When it comes to clean and comfortable midrange hotels, the Mariana is the pick of the pack. All of the well-tended rooms here come with a bathroom and a balcony.

Cheap eats are easy to find in Kasese. **Good Times Restaurant** (Stanley St; meals USh2000), opposite the Saad Hotel, knocks together huge portions of cheap Ugandan standards.

Titi's Supermarket (Rwenzori Rd) is the best stocked place in Kasese for those heading into the Rwenzoris.

Getting There & Away

From the bus/taxi station, or from individual bus offices along the main streets in the town centre, buses go daily to Kampala (USh15,000, eight hours), via Masaka and Mbarara, and to Kabale (USh12,000, five hours). Minibus taxis frequently leave for Fort Portal (USh3000, two hours) and Mbarara (USh6000, three hours) from the roundabout to the southeast, near the Esso petrol station.

RWENZORI NATIONAL PARK

The fabled, mist-covered Mountains of the Moon, the Rwenzoris stretch for about 100km, and include several mountains that are permanently covered by snow and glaciers. The highest peak is Margherita (5109m) on Mt Stanley.

Trekking the Rwenzoris has never been as popular with travellers as Mt Kilimanjaro and Mt Kenya because trekking conditions are tough, and the mountains have a well-deserved reputation for being very wet at times. As it says on the wall of Bujuku hut, 'Jesus came here to learn how to walk on water. After five days, anyone could do it.' But those who take up the challenge are rewarded with magnificent scenery, including tropical vegetation that yields to other-worldly giant groundsel and glistening glaciers. And unlike Kili or Kenya, you'll probably have it all to yourself; gazing over the DRC from the heights, you'll feel like Sir Edmund Hillary.

Trekking

Contact the UWA office in Kampala (see p799) or the RMS office in Kasese (see left): UWA administer the US\$567 charge for the seven-day climb, and RMS controls all facilities in the park and organises the treks.

A six-day trek is the absolute minimum set by park rules, but seven or eight days is better, including one or two days at the top huts. Starting in Nyakalengija, the route winds past the Guy Yeoman Hut (3450m), the Kitandara Hut (3990m), the Bujuk Hut (3900m) and John Mate Hut (3350m). The best times to trek are between late December and late February and from mid-June to mid-August. Even at these times the higher reaches are often enveloped in mist. Good

all-weather clothing is required, but RMS rent a lot of gear. Be aware of the dangers of high-altitude sickness.

Getting There & Away

The easiest way to access the Rwenzoris is to catch a minibus (USh1500) from Kasese to the park headquarters at Ibanda.

KABALE

☎ 0486

Dubbed the 'Switzerland of Africa' by tourist brochures and travellers alike, although there weren't many volcanoes in the Alps at last count. This southwestern corner of Uganda is a stunner, however, with intricately terraced hills and fjordlike lakes. Kabale is Uganda's highest town (about 2000m) and it gets a touch chilly at night – don't forget the winter woollies.

Information

For the fuller flavour of Kabale, pick up a copy of the *Lake Bunyoni & Kabale In Your Pocket* guide (USh1000), available at the Home of Edirisa (p801).

Getting cash in Kabale has traditionally been tough. Most foreign exchange bureaux and banks offer terrible rates compared with Kampala, about 15% or so lower.

Byoona Amagara (Nyerere Ave; per min USh25) The cheapest internet access in town.

Gorilla Parks Information Office (Kisoro Rd) UWA staff here cannot book gorilla trips and are not in direct contact with either Bwindi or Mgahinga. Contact UWA in Kampala (see p799) to stay ahead.

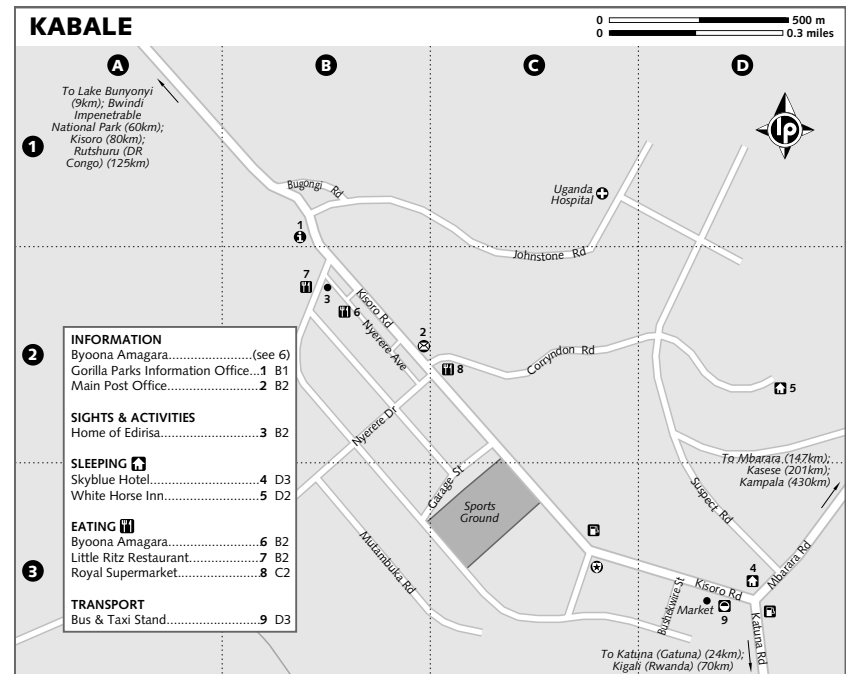
Main post office (Kisoro Rd)

Sleeping & Eating

Few travellers stay in Kabale with beautiful Lake Bunyonyi (p810) just a short hop away.

Home of Edirisa (☎ 077-558558; www.edirisa.org; dm/ s/d USh3000/5000/15,000; 🍷) Experience the novelty of staying in a museum, plus it's free entry for guests! The dorms are cheaper than most camping, while the bigger rooms include a bathroom. Facilities include a book exchange, and great shakes and coffees in the little café. It's signposted all over town. Book ahead.

Sky Blue Hotel (☎ 22154; Mbarara Rd; s/d USh8000/12,000) This place is scrupulously clean,



and service includes towels and soap. All the rooms are named after the planets – if you are suffering from dodgy guts you might need to think about Uranus.

White Horse Inn (☎ 26010; fax 23717; Coryndon Rd; s/d US\$68,000/85,000) Imperiously set on a hill overlooking the town, this is Kabale's most famous address. It's an attractive place with verdant gardens, but its furnishings could come straight out of a '70s porn flick.

Byoona Amagara (Nyerere Ave; meals US\$3000-6000) The innovative menu here is one of the best beyond Kampala. Salad Caprese, *matokoe* with ginger and pizzas...save some space for the great desserts.

Little Ritz Restaurant (Nyerere Ave; meals from US\$2.50) The long-running Little Ritz has good service and memorable food, plus an attached bar that draws a football crowd.

Those planning to do a bit of self-catering at Bwindi or Lake Bunyonyi should make for **Royal Supermarket** (Kisoro Rd), which has a healthy stock.

Getting There & Away

Several buses go to Kampala (US\$15,000, six hours) via Mbarara and Masaka early every morning from the bus and taxi stand next to the market. The post bus departs at 6.30am daily (except Sunday) for Kampala from the main post office on Kisoro Rd.

Buses to Kisoro (US\$7000) depart at 10am and 4pm, passing over the Kanaba Gap with stunning views of Lake Bunyonyi and the Virunga volcanoes along the way.

For information about transport to Kigali (Rwanda), see p821.

LAKE BUNYONYI

Lake Bunyonyi looks like something straight out of *The Hobbit*, with terraced fields plunging into hidden bays and tiny islands dotted about. Guesthouses and locals have **dugout canoes** for rent, but practise before planning a *grand tour de Bunyonyi*, as many travellers end up going round and round in circles, known locally as the *muzungu* corkscrew.

Bunyonyi Overland Camp (☎ 0486-23741; highland@imul.com; camp sites US\$6000, furnished tents s/d US\$20,000/30,000, s/d r US\$25,000/35,000, s/d cottage US\$30,000/50,000; 📧) One of the most attractive camps in Uganda, the sculpted gardens and lakeside setting ensure this place is hugely popular. For those relying on shared facilities, the camp has the best toilets in Uganda

and hot water. There is a lively restaurant and bar, although it can take an eternity for food to arrive.

Byoona Amagara (☎ 075-652788; www.lakebunyonyi.net; camp sites US\$3000, dm/r/geodome/cabin US\$6000/8000/11,000/14,000) This place bills itself a backpacker's paradise, and it is hard to disagree given its blissful setting on Itambira island. All proceeds go towards supporting community projects. Inexpensive meals are available. To get here, take the Lake Bunyoni secondary school boat (US\$7500, 12 minutes) or a dug-out (US\$2500, 50 minutes) from the Rutinda market pier.

Nature's Prime Island (☎ 077-423215; naturesprimeisland@yahoo.co.uk; tents/cabins per person US\$32/37, both full board) Formerly Far Out Camp, Nature's Prime occupies a lovely little island opposite Overland. The cabins are Scandinavian-style and have lake views, while the tents are set on raised platforms. The bar-restaurant is a fine place to relax over a beer with great views across the lake.

To travel the 9km from Kabale to Lake Bunyonyi, catch a minibus taxi (best on Monday and Friday), charter a *boda-boda* or arrange a private taxi.

KISORO

☎ 0486

Kisoro is a one-horse town at the southwestern tip of Uganda and a base for trips to Mgahinga National Park. However, on a clear day, the views of the Virunga chain of volcanoes are fantastic.

Mgahinga National Park Office (☎ 30098) is the place to inquire about visiting the gorillas.

Hotel Virunga (☎ 30109; camp sites US\$3, d US\$30,000, s/d without bathroom US\$8000/15,000) has really taken off with overland trucks now that the DRC is open for gorilla tracking once more. The camping area is attractive and the simple rooms are sensibly priced. Out front is a little restaurant that rocks on as a bar on busy nights.

Skyblue Hotel (☎ 30076; s/d US\$8000/12,000) is a not-so-distant relative of the Kabale outfit of the same name. Super service for these prices and one of Kisoro's better restaurants.

Travellers Rest Hotel (☎ 30123; postmaster@gorillatours.com; s/d US\$35/45) is a hotel with a history. Originally set up by the 'father' of gorilla tourism, Walter Baumgartel, Dian Fossey stayed here regularly. The rooms have elegant décor and hot water on tap. The restaurant has the best menu in town.

Horizon Coaches (☎ 077 469774) has three buses a day to Kampala (US\$18,000, departing between 4.30am and 9am, nine hours). There are plenty of minibus taxis to Kabale (US\$7000, two hours).

To arrange transport to Mgahinga, contact the national park office or one of the hotels.

MGAHINGA GORILLA NATIONAL PARK

When it comes to beautiful backdrops and gorillas in the mist, Mgahinga leaves Bwindi trailing as the jagged Virunga volcanoes are Africa at its biggest and best. Small park (34 sq km), big personality – this is the place for fans of voluptuous vistas and brooding volcanoes. Contiguous with Parc National des Volcans in Rwanda and Parc National des Virunga in the DRC, together they form the Virunga Conservation Area (420 sq km), home to half of the world's mountain gorillas.

Activities

TRACKING GORILLAS

The Mgahinga gorillas have been on an extended vacation in Rwanda and show no obvious signs of returning. You can't follow, even with a passport, so chances of seeing the gorillas here are lower than in Bwindi, the DRC or Rwanda. Should they return, reservations to visit the gorillas must be made at UWA headquarters in Kampala (see p799). The cost is US\$375, including park fees, a ranger and armed guards. Eight visitors per day leave the park headquarters at Ntebeko Camp, 12km from Kisoro, at 8am.

GOLDEN MONKEY TRACKING

If the gorillas continue to be AWOL, then golden monkeys will have to take up the challenge of luring tourists to Mgahinga. These are beautiful creatures and are quite playful. It costs US\$20 to track them.

HIKING

Mt Muhavura (4127m), Mt Sabinyo (3669m) and Mt Gahinga (3437m) can be climbed in a day for US\$40 per person, including a ranger/guide. The 13km **nature trail** (per person half-/full day US\$5/10) offers the chance to spot some of the hundred or more species of bird.

Sleeping & Eating

Mgahinga Community Rest Camp (camp sites/dm/bandas US\$3000/6000/20,000) A fine little establishment near the main gate with jaw-dropping

views of the volcanoes. There is a small canteen, and all proceeds are pumped back into the local community.

Mt Gahinga Rest Camp (☎ 041-346464; www.volcanoessafaris.com; s/d US\$240/360) This upmarket camp has upped its standards and prices in the last few years. Accommodation is in smart stone *bandas* and there is a great viewing tower on the grounds.

Getting There & Away

There's no public transport between Kisoro and the park headquarters, so you'll have to hitch a ride (there is little traffic) or charter a pick-up (about US\$25,000) from Kisoro.

LAKE MBURO NATIONAL PARK

This national park (260 sq km) is the zebra capital of Uganda. Midway between Masaka and Mbarara, the terrain is savannah with scattered acacia trees. There are five lakes, including Mburo, and some of the rarer mammals in Uganda, such as impalas, elands, reedbucks, klipspringers and topis. Lake Mburo is one of the few national parks in which visitors are allowed to **walk**, accompanied by a ranger.

Rwonyo Rest Camp (park headquarters; s/d/bandas US\$10,000/15,000/20,000) offers some of UWA's better *bandas*. Meals are available, or you can buy fresh fish from locals. More serene for campers is the **camp site** (per person US\$10,000) on the shores of Lake Mburo, just a short distance from Rwonyo.

There are three entrances to the national park from the main Masaka–Mbarara road, but for hitching into the park or chartering a vehicle, it's best to use the route from Sanga. A 4WD is recommended, but a trip around the park is possible in a 2WD car during the dry season.

MASAKA

☎ 0481

Masaka is not a place where travellers linger; for most it's just an overnight stop en route to the Sese Islands in Lake Victoria, or for anyone travelling overland to Tanzania.

The homely **Masaka Backpackers** (☎ 077-619389; camp sites US\$3500, dm/bandas US\$5000/15,000) feels remote and rural, but then it is quite out of the way – 4km south of town just off the road to the Tanzanian border. Take a Kirimya taxi, get off at Kasanvu and follow the signs.

The smartest rooms in town have their home at **Hotel Brovad** (☎ 21455; www.hotelbrovad.com; s/d/tr USh40,000/65,000/80,000). All have satellite TV, fridge and phone, and are superclean. The restaurant and bar are pretty busy by night.

Bananah Chick (Kampala Rd; meals USh2000-5000) is Masaka's answer to fast food; drop in for fried chicken, steaks or curries.

Buses and minibus taxis run frequently to Kampala (USh5000, two hours) and Mbarara (USh6000, 2½ hours).

MBARARA

☎ 0485

There's not a lot to linger for in Mbarara, but it's a useful place to stop on the way to or from southwestern Uganda. Linked to the Source Café in Jinja, **Source Internet Café** (High St; per min USh100) is a reliable place to check email. **Standard Chartered Bank** (☎ 20088; 24 High St) has an ATM, plus it can change cash and travellers cheques in most major currencies.

Mayoba Inn (☎ 21161; 1 High St; s/d USh12,000/14,000, without bathroom USh7500/9000) gets the vote among the cheaper places as it is well managed and quite clean. There's also a restaurant and bar here.

Rwizi Arch Hotel (☎ 20821; rwizi-arch@africaonline.co.ug; s/tw/ste USh64,000/70,000/125,000; 🍷) might be the smartest hotel in town. The rooms are fully equipped with all the trimmings, and facilities include a pool. Also home to the best food in town.

Drop by **Mbarara Coffee Shop** (High St; dishes US\$2-3) to sample the excellent menu of pastas and curries, and inexpensive sandwiches and cakes.

Buses and minibus taxis frequently go to Kampala (USh9000, five hours), Masaka, Kabale and Kasese.

QUEEN ELIZABETH NATIONAL PARK

Home to the greatest collection of mammal species in Uganda, this park (2000 sq km) is bordered to the north by the Rwenzori Mountains and to the west by beautiful Lake Edward. It once boasted massive herds of elephants, buffalos, kobs and hippos but, like Murchison Falls, much of its wildlife was wiped out during the civil war. It's worth visiting to see the huge numbers of hippos and some of the 500 and more species of bird.

Take a boat trip (US\$15, two hours, 3pm guaranteed, 9am, 11am and 5pm US\$150 shared by all comers) up the **Kazinga Channel**

between Lake George and Lake Edward to see hippos and pelicans.

The stunning **Kyambura (Chambura) Gorge**, in the eastern corner of the park, is home to a variety of primates, including chimpanzees. The best way to visit this little Eden is on a **walking safari** (US\$30 per person, three to five hours), organised at the ranger post here.

Rangers are available for **wildlife drives** at US\$10/20 per vehicle per half-/full day.

Sleeping & Eating

The main places to stay are on Mweya Peninsula, overlooking Lake Edward.

Students' Camp (dm USh10,000, camp sites per person USh10,000) The cheapest place, but is often bursting at the seams with Ugandan school parties, leaving camping the only option.

Ecology Institute (dm USh10,000, r without bathroom per person USh20,000) An easier place to find a bed. Rooms are clean, if musty, but the shared bathrooms leave something to be desired.

Mweya Safari Lodge (☎ lodge 0483-44266, bookings 039-260260; www.mweyalodge.com; s/d with full board US\$99/180; 🍷 🍷) This sophisticated safari lodge has a stunning setting on the raised peninsula of Mweya. Sitting on the terrace with a cold drink at sunset is perfect and the swimming pool has an enviable setting. For a memorable meal, the classy restaurant here (meals USh8000 to USh15,000) is a must and that includes nonguests.

Getting There & Away

The main gate is at Katunguru, accessible on any minibus taxi travelling between Kasese (USh3000, one hour) and Mbarara (USh5000, two hours). From the gate, it's 24km to the Mweya Peninsula. Try hitching at weekends or charter a vehicle in Katunguru (around USh30,000) if traffic is light.

SSESE ISLANDS

☎ 0481

This is Uganda's answer to the Mediterranean. A beautiful group of 84 islands lying off the northwestern shores of Lake Victoria, with beaches ringing the shores, complete with swaying palms for that tropical touch. Inland lie rolling hills coated with lush rainforest. Locals live in villages along the shoreline and launch their fishing boats each evening at sunset.

Many spots afford beautiful views over the lake and across to the other islands. Negotiat-

ing with fishermen for a **boat trip** around the islands is easy, and **swimming** is also possible off most of the islands, although avoid reedy areas – bilharzia alert (see p1136 for more on bilharzia).

There is nowhere to change money on any of the islands.

Sleeping & Eating

The accommodation options are mostly limited to Buggala Island, usually in or near Kalangala.

Panorama Camping Safaris (☎ 077-406371; camp sites USh3000, bandas with/without bathroom USh30,000/20,000) Located below Kalangala near the water, it is well set up with hot water on request and a generator.

Hornbill Camp Site (☎ 077-729478; www.hornbillcamp.com; camp sites USh4500, dm/bandas USh7500/20,000) The most popular spot in the Sseses, it is about a 15-minute walk below Kalangala. It's a fun and friendly place to stay, right on the lakeshore.

Ssesse Palm Beach (☎ 077-623984; bandas US\$25-65) Boasting the best location of any of the resorts here, it is on a headland with its own private beach. The restaurant has a prime location for a sundowner and is open to all comers.

Getting There & Away

From the New Taxi Park in Kampala, catch a minibus taxi towards Masaka and get off at Nyendo (about 3km north of Masaka). Kalangala Express (USh6000, four hours, 10am and 2pm) has two big buses a day from Nyendo straight through to Kalanagala. There is a direct bus from Kampala to Kalangala (USh12,000, seven hours), which leaves the new taxi park in Kampala daily at 8.30am. There is also a regular ferry between Bukakata (a village on the mainland) and Liku (the westernmost village on Buggala). Pick-ups travel to Kalangala (USh4000) from Liku.

EASTERN UGANDA

JINJA

☎ 043

Jinja has some of the world's best white-water rafting on its doorstep, and is emerging as the adrenaline centre of East Africa, picking up punters as fast as Zimbabwe is losing them. Check out the leafy 'suburbs' in the northwest to get an idea of how grand this town must

have been in its heyday. Jinja is the source of the mighty Nile, the world's longest river, which winds its way from here through Egypt and Sudan to the Mediterranean.

Information

Main post office (cnr Main St & Bell Ave) Postal services and card phones.

Source Café (20 Main St; per min USh50) A popular place to get online.

Standard Chartered Bank (☎ 122661; Main St) Currency exchange, travellers-cheque encashment and an ATM.

Sights

The **Source of the Nile** (admission USh2000) is marked by a popular but uninspiring plaque, all finished in garish reds and yellows thanks to official sponsorship by Bell Brewery. Nearby is a bronze bust of Mahatma Gandhi, commemorating one of the spots where his ashes were scattered – was Gandhi the first to raft the Nile?

Bujagali Falls are more like a series of monstrous rapids than a waterfall, but the location is stunning. The falls are about 9km from central Jinja; find a minibus taxi or catch a *boda-boda*.

Sleeping

Speke Camp (☎ 075 584171; www.bujagali.co.ug; camp sites per person US\$2, dm US\$5, d bandas US\$15) Right next to Bujagali Falls, this is an attractive site with a small restaurant and bar area that fills up on weekends.

Nile High Camp (☎ 077-237438; Nilehigh@surffthesource.com; Kimaka Rd; camp sites US\$2, dm US\$5, r per person US\$20) Nile High is the base of Adrift (p815) and the pretty camp includes solid dorms, camping grounds and a couple of bungalows with big river views.

Explorers Backpackers (☎ 120236; www.raftafrica.com; 41 Wilson Ave; camp sites US\$3, dm/d US\$5/15; 🍷) The most popular budget crash pad in town, with a cheap bar, satellite TV and the obligatory pool table.

Nile River Explorers Camp (camp site per person US\$3, dm/bandas US\$5/20) Under the same ownership, this is a legendary camp site above Bujagali Falls with killer views.

Eden Rock Resort (☎ 077-501222; www.edenrocknile.com; Bujagali Falls; camp sites US\$3, r USh27,000) Eden Rock Resort played host to Prince William when he came rafting in Uganda a few years ago, although it's unlikely his grandmother

would approve of the rooms. It offers basic *bandas* with bathrooms, set amid impressive gardens. Eden Rock is next door to ATA Café.

Nile Porch (☎ 120236; www.nileporch.com; Bujagali; s/d/tr US\$54/84/108; 📶 📶) The Nile Porch brings the lodge experience to Bujagali. The luxurious tents are superbly set on a cliff above the river, and include hot-water bathrooms and elegant furnishings. Sipping cocktails by the pool is a fine way to pass an afternoon.

Gately on Nile (☎ 122400; www.gately-on-nile.com; 34 Kisingja Rd; s/d US\$60/86) Set in a grand old colonial house with sumptuous grounds, Gately offers a selection of thoughtfully decorated rooms, some with fine views. The restaurant here is one of the best in town.

Eating & Drinking

Source Café (☎ 120911; 20 Main St; mains USh1500-4500) Hit the Source for a fair selection of light bites, salads, brownies and pastries. The place for a coffee fix, as it has a wide choice.

Black Lantern (☎ 078-321541; www.nileporch.com; mains USh5000-15,000) Bujagali's premier dining destination, this is the restaurant at the Nile Porch. Spare ribs are a speciality and the portions are enormous.

ATA Café (☎ 077-377185; mains USh2000-5000) Drop in on this friendly little café above Bujagali Falls, part of the quad-biking setup, for good company and cheap eats. The menu includes the best-value all-day breakfast in Uganda.

There is serious partying at the Nile River camp at Bujagali almost every night, as there

ADRENALINE CAPITAL OF EAST AFRICA

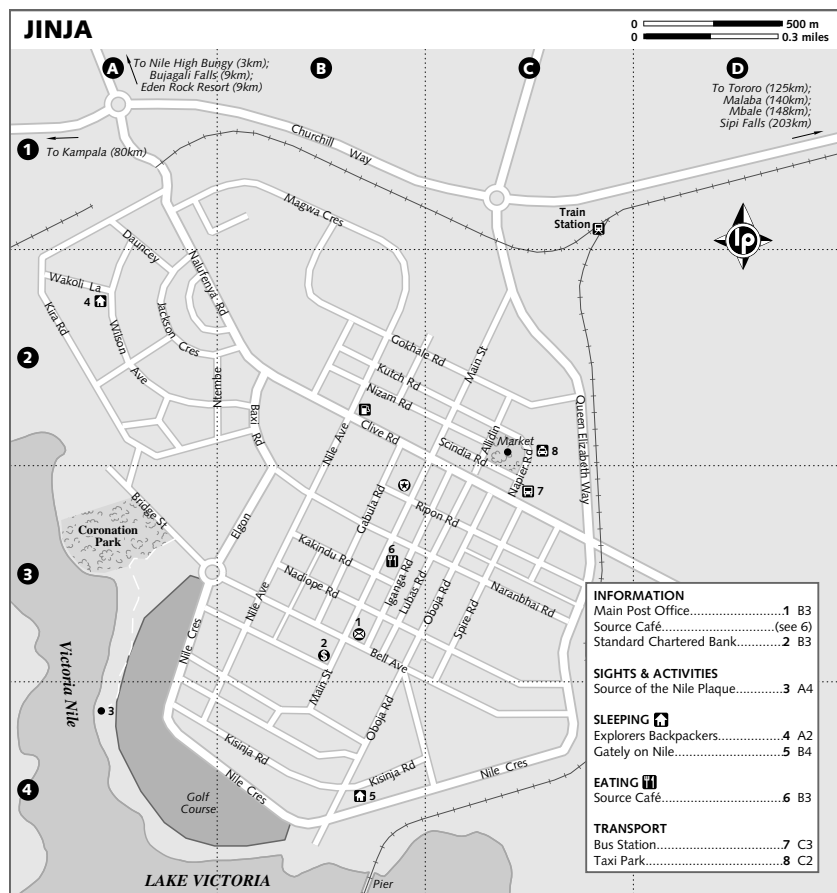
Welcome to the new Vic Falls! White-water rafting, kayaking, quad biking, bungee jumping, all these adventures and more are on tap around Jinja.

The source of the Nile is one of the most spectacular white-water rafting destinations in the world. There are several companies offering exhilaration without compromise: **Adrift** (☎ 041-252720; www.surfthesource.com; 7 Kira Rd, Kampala), **Nile River Explorers** (NRE; ☎ 041-120236; www.raftafrica.com), and **Nalubale Rafting** (☎ 078-638938; www.nalubalerafting.com). It costs US\$95 for a full day on the water. All the companies take on the monster Grade Five rapids, including **Itanda** (The Bad Place). All accept credit cards, and you can also book trips through guesthouses and hotels in Kampala, including pick-ups.

Other river activities include river boarding – taking on the mighty waters of the Nile armed only with a boogie board – and kayaking courses to learn how to tame the raging river with a paddle. Check out **Kayak the Nile** (www.kayakthenile.com). All in all, the Nile looks set to compete with the Zambezi for the title of Africa's favourite river for frolics in the coming years.

Want to look at the Nile from another angle? **Nile High Bungy** (☎ 043-122190; bungy@surfthesource.com) is a 44m-high drop over the river and costs US\$55. It is signposted 2km down the road to Bujagali Falls.

If that all sounds a bit wet and wild, it is also possible to do some quality quad biking with **All Terrain Adventures** (☎ 077 377185; www.atadventures.com), starting with a one-hour fun run for US\$60,000. For a slower look at the countryside, horse riding is available with **Nile Horseback Safaris** (☎ 077 4101196; www.nilehorsebacksafaris.com). Two-hour rides start from US\$40.



always seem to be a queue of overland trucks in town.

Getting There & Away

Buses and minibus taxis frequently travel to Kampala (US\$4000, 1½ hours), as well as Malaba (US\$7000, two hours), Busia (US\$6000, two hours) and Mbale (US\$6000, two hours).

MBALE

☎ 045

Mbale is a thriving provincial city with a superb setting at the bottom of Mt Elgon (4321m). It's an excellent base for expeditions to Mt Elgon National Park and Sipi Falls.

Information

Serve Supermarket (5 Cathedral Ave; per min USh50) A reliable internet connection above a local supermarket.

Standard Chartered Bank (☎ 35141; 37 Republic St) Changes major currencies, travellers cheques and has an ATM.

Uganda Wildlife Authority office (UWA; ☎ 33720; www.uwa.or.ug; 19 Masaba Rd; 🕒 8am-5pm) For information on climbing Mt Elgon; the staff can help organise a trek.

Sleeping

Apule Safari Lodge (☎ 077-502421; 5 Naboa Rd; s/d USh12,000/14,000, s without bathroom USh8000) This little courtyard lodge offers 'executive accom-

modation', although most corporations would disagree. Each room is named after one of Uganda's many lakes.

Mt Elgon View Hotel (☎ 34668; 1 Cathedral Ave; d USh25,000, s/d without bathroom USh12,000/15,000) This is the most popular place with travellers. Not to be confused with the more expensive Mt Elgon Hotel. On a clear day you might get a view of the looming mountain.

Mt Elgon Hotel (☎ 33454; 30 Masaba Rd; s USh45,000-75,000, d US\$50,000-85,000; 📶) Recently given a much needed makeover, this colonial-era stalwart is once again one of the best addresses in Mbale. The rooms are large and spacious with satellite TV.

Eating & Drinking

Nurali's Café (7 Cathedral Ave; mains USh3500-7000) Located beneath the Mt Elgon View Hotel, Nurali's is an inspiring Indian restaurant offering a succulent fish tikka, plus some Ugandan dishes, a bit of Italian and a smattering of Chinese – almost a UN menu.

Club Oasis (Cathedral Ave; admission US\$0.60; 🕒 Wed-Sun) This is the late-night spot for pool, music and a dash of dancing.

Getting There & Away

Minibus taxis run serve Tororo (US\$3000, one hour), Jinja (US\$6000, two hours) and Kampala (US\$10,000, three hours).

For Budadiri (park headquarters for Mt Elgon National Park) and Kapchorwe (for Sipi Falls), infrequent minibus taxis leave from the taxi park on Kumi Rd.

SIPI FALLS

Sensational Sipi Falls has three tiers, but the iconic lower one drops straight over a sheer cliff. Quite a sight, Sipi is 55km northeast of Mbale.

Guides are easy to arrange (about USh5000) for short hikes around the falls, and are worthwhile because some trails are not well marked.

Moses' Camp Site (camp sites USh4000, bandas per person USh10,000) is spectacularly set near a cliff, and has flourishing flower gardens and some big vistas. The basic restaurant serves simple but effective meals.

Crow's Nest (☎ 077-800705; thecrownsnets@yahoo.com; camp sites USh6000, dm/cabins USh12,000/30,000) is the place for stunning views across to the falls. Cabins are sort of Swedish in style, and the restaurant turns out food with flair. Yes, someone really did make a mess of the email: crowsnets, not nest!

Lacam Lodge (☎ 075-292554; www.lacamlodge.co.uk; camp sites USh25,000, r per person USh35,000-66,000) is the closest to Sipi Falls, with a great view of the main drop. Accommodation is full board which includes breakfast, lunch and a slap-up dinner.

From Mbale, take a minibus taxi to Sipi or Kapchorwe (USh4000, one hour) and jump off near the falls. Start early, as transport dries up later in the day. It might be more convenient to hire a private taxi if making a day trip from Mbale.

MOUNT ELGON NATIONAL PARK

Mt Elgon is the affordable alternative to the Rwenzoris, offering challenging but accessible wilderness trekking and wild scenery. The national park encompasses much of Mt Elgon, which has one of the largest surface areas (80km by 50km) of any extinct volcano in the world, and runs right up to the Kenyan border. Wagagai is the park's highest peak at 4321m.

Trekking

Tourism on Mt Elgon is still in its infancy, so don't expect the sort of well-worn paths found on Mt Kenya or Mt Kilimanjaro. The reward is fewer folk on the trails. The best

WARNING

Don't attempt to trek without a guide as it is illegal. It could also end in tears as Elgon is a big mountain.

time to trek is between December and March, and June and August. However, the seasons are unpredictable and it can rain at any time. Altitude sickness is a possible danger for those planning to climb to Wagagai.

The three main trekking routes include the **Sasa Trail**, which starts at Budadiri (USh3000 from Mbale), the **Sipi Trail**, which begins at Sipi Falls, and the lesser-used **Piswa Trail**, which starts at Kapkwata. Allow four to five days return to complete the trek to the main peaks.

The best place to organise a trek is the UWA office in Mbale; see p815. The information centres at Budadiri, the Forest Exploration Centre (near Sipi) and Kapkwata can also help.

Trekking on Mt Elgon costs US\$30 per person per day, including park entry fees, camping and ranger guide fees. It does not include porters (USh8000 per day). These prices cover food for the guide and porters as well, but not tips, which are welcome. Fees can be paid in Mbale or at the information centres.

Sleeping

Many trekkers start or finish at Sipi Falls; see left for more details.

The park has several camp sites along the main trails. Basic tents and sleeping bags can be hired from the Forest Exploration Centre, but bring all cooking equipment, food and water.

Rose's Last Chance (Budadiri; camp sites per person USh5000, r USh7000) A popular place to stay before or after scaling the heights. Fun and friendly, testing local brews is a favourite activity here.

Forest Exploration Centre (camp sites USh7500, dm USh11,000, cottage s/d USh20,000/50,000) Has solid dorms and tasteful cottages. It is 1½ hours from Sipi on foot; contact the UWA office in Mbale for bookings (see p815).

Those starting out on the less popular Piswa Trail can stay at the **Kapkwata Guesthouse** (r USh11,000), which is, unsurprisingly, in Kapkwata.

NORTHERN UGANDA

MURCHISON FALLS NATIONAL PARK

Back in the 1960s, Murchison was one of the best parks in Africa and it's steadily recovered from the bad old years to reclaim its place as Uganda's best all-rounder. The immense Victoria Nile flows through it on the way to Lake Albert. This is one of the easiest parks to access for independent travellers.

Murchison Falls is the most spectacular feature of the Nile along its 6700km length. The gorge is just 6m wide, making the falls one of the most powerful surges of water found anywhere in the world.

A must at Murchison is the three-hour **launch trip** from park headquarters at Paraa to the falls, passing hippos and crocs galore. The boat leaves (if there's enough demand) at 9am and 2pm, and the cost depends on numbers (about US\$150 per boat holding up to 10). Weekends provide the best chance of finding other punters, reducing the cost to US\$15. It is possible to be dropped at the base of the falls for a spectacular trek to the top.

Chimp tracking in and around Murchison is much cheaper than at Kibale Forest or Queen Elizabeth National Parks. It costs just USh12,000 at either **Busingiro** or **Kaniyo Pabidi**, but the latter is inside the park boundaries, meaning a US\$25 hit on top.

Rangers are recommended for **wildlife drives** (available from the park headquarters); the cost is US\$10/20 per vehicle per half-/full day.

Sleeping & Eating

Red Chili Rest Camp (☎ 077-709510; www.redchillihideaway.com; camp sites USh10,000, safari tent USh25,000, tw banda USh45,000, without bathroom USh30,000) The popular Red Chili team from Kampala runs this rest camp, bringing a budget option to backpackers in Murchison. Camping is on a grassy site with some Nile views, and the *bandas* are well tended. The restaurant and bar have at weekends.

Sambiya River Lodge (☎ 041-233596; www.africultourstravel.com; camp sites USh10,000, bandas s/d USh8,000/140,000, without bathroom USh65,000/110,000, cottages US\$50/100; 🚽) Just off the main track, beside the turn-off to the falls, seclusion is the



name of the game and there's a small swimming pool.

Paraa Safari Lodge (📞 bookings 078-260260; www.paraalodge.com; s/d with full board US\$99/150; 🏠) On the northern bank of the river, this hotel-style lodge has a striking location with expansive views upriver towards the falls, and excellent facilities, including a swim-up bar overlooking the Nile.

Wannabe chimp-trackers can stay at the great-value if basic **camp**s (camp sites/bandas per person US\$10,000/US\$15,000) at Busingiro or Kaniyo Pabidi. Bring your own food, though.

At the head of Murchison Falls, there's also a **camp site** (per person US\$10,000) with a tiptop location, but you will need to be completely self-sufficient. Sleepwalkers stay away!

Getting There & Away

By road, the usual route is from Kampala via Masindi (US\$900, three hours). Getting from Masindi directly to Paraa by public transport is not possible. With a bit of bargaining, however, you can charter a minibus (US\$75,000) or special-hire taxi (US\$60,000) to take you all the way. From Masindi there are irregular buses and minibus taxis to Wanseko, on the western edge of the park. Otherwise try and hitch with a park vehicle. Check with the park office opposite the post office in Masindi.

Both Backpackers Hostel (p801) and Red Chilli Hideaway (p801) in Kampala organise three-day budget safaris to Murchison Falls, which are great value and good fun.

The car ferry across the river at Paraa costs US\$2000/20,000 for passengers/cars, and leaves hourly in both directions (7am to 7pm).

Remember that most areas north of the park, particularly the roads to Lira and Gulu, are potentially dangerous.

UGANDA DIRECTORY

ACCOMMODATION

There are plenty of opportunities for camping in Uganda. Camping usually costs from US\$3000 to US\$10,000 per person, but in national parks factor in the entry fees.

There are backpacker places in Kampala and Jinja, as well as on the Ssesse Islands, around Lake Bunyoni and near Fort Portal. There are plenty of forgettable cheap hotels in most of the provincial towns, but smarter hotels are only available in Kampala, Jinja

PRACTICALITIES

- Uganda uses the metric system and distances are in kilometres.
- Electricity in Uganda is 240V, 50 cycles, but is universally unreliable. British three-pin plugs are mainly used.
- Local newspapers that are available include the government-owned daily *New Vision* or the more independent daily *Monitor*. International magazines, like *Time*, *Newsweek* and the *Economist*, are also readily available.
- The government-run TV station is Uganda TV, but decent hotels and many bars have satellite TV for international news and sport.
- Radio Uganda broadcasts in English and local languages on AM frequencies. BBC World Service broadcasts on 101.3MHz, while the phenomenally popular Capital FM can be found at 91.3MHz.

and Mbarara. Most of the national parks have luxury tented camps, the price rising with exclusivity.

ACTIVITIES

There are stacks of activities to choose from in Uganda, most related to wildlife viewing in the national parks, but adrenaline rushes, such as white-water rafting (US\$95 per day), bungee jumping (US\$55) or quad biking at Jinja, the source of the Nile, are also mighty popular.

Gorilla tracking is one of the major drawcards in Uganda; it is possible at Bwindi (US\$375) and, sometimes, Mgahinga (US\$375) National Parks in the southwest. Almost as popular, particularly as it's much cheaper, is chimpanzee tracking, which can be done at Kibale Forest (US\$70) or Queen Elizabeth (US\$30) National Parks or at Murchison Falls National Park for just US\$12,000.

Trekking the mountains of Uganda is another pull. The hard-core head for Rwenzori (from US\$567 for seven days), one of the toughest climbs in Africa, but for something less taxing – on the pocket and legs – try Mt Elgon (US\$30 per day for four to five days).

Other popular activities include community walks around forests and areas of outstanding beauty; wildlife drives in the bigger parks; bird-watching throughout the country;

and boat trips to view wildlife in Murchison Falls and Queen Elizabeth National Parks.

BUSINESS HOURS

Government offices and businesses in Uganda are generally open between 8.30am and 4.30pm or 5.30pm, with a short break for lunch some time between noon and 2pm. Most shops and banks do not break for lunch, but some banks close early at 3.30pm.

Local restaurant hours are 7am to 9pm, and international-type restaurants are open 11.30am to 2.30pm and 5.30pm to 10.30pm.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Although much of Uganda is generally safe, there are some risky areas. North of Murchison Falls National Park, and around some towns, such as Lira and Gulu, the fruitcakes of the LRA continue to wreak havoc. It is also important to take care in the far north-east due to regular clashes between armed Karamajong people and anyone they don't like. It is imperative to make inquiries with knowledgeable local authorities before setting off to these areas.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

Ugandan Embassies & Consulates

Belgium (📞 02-762 5825; Ave de Tervuren 317, 1150 Brussels)

Canada (📞 613-613 7797; 231 Cobourg St, Ottawa, Ontario K1N 8J2)

Denmark (📞 31 62066; Sofievej 15, DK 2900, Hellerup)

Ethiopia (📞 01-513531; Africa Ave H-18, K-36, Addis Ababa)

France (📞 01 53 70 62 70; 13 Ave Raymond Poincare, 75116 Paris)

Italy (📞 /fax 06-322 5220; Via Ennio Quirino Visconti 8, 00193 Rome)

Japan (📞 03-3465 4552; 39-15 Oyama-chi, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo 151)

South Africa (📞 012-344 4100; Trafalgar Court, Apt 35B, 634 Park St, Arcadia 0083, Pretoria)

UK (📞 020-7839 5783; Uganda House, 58/59 Trafalgar Sq, London WC2N 5DX)

USA (📞 202-726 0416; 5909 16th St NW, Washington DC 20011-2896)

Embassies & Consulates in Uganda

Countries with representation in Kampala (area code 📞 041) include:

Belgium (Map p802; 📞 041-349559; Rwenzori House, Lumumba Ave)

Burundi (📞 235850; Hannington Rd)

Denmark (Map p802; 📞 350938; 3 Lumumba Ave)

DRC (Map p800; 📞 230610; 20 Philip Rd, Kololo)

Ethiopia (Map p800; 📞 341885; Nakayima Rd)

France (Map p802; 📞 342120; 16 Lumumba Ave)

Italy (📞 250450; 11 Lourdel Rd, Nakasero)

Kenya (Map p800; 📞 258235; 41 Nakasero Rd)

Netherlands (Map p802; 📞 346000; Rwenzori House, Lumumba Ave)

Rwanda (Map p800; 📞 344045; 2 Nakayima Rd)

South Africa (Map p802; 📞 230001; 15A Nakasero Rd)

Sudan (Map p800; 📞 243518; 21 Nakasero Rd)

Tanzania (📞 256272; 6 Kagera Rd)

UK (Map p800; 📞 312000; Kira Rd)

USA (Map p800; 📞 259791; Gaba Rd)

HEALTH

A yellow fever vaccination certificate is sometimes required for entry or exit, but we have never been asked to produce one during our visits.

HOLIDAYS

As well as religious holidays listed on p1106, the principal public holidays in Uganda are:

New Year's Day 1 January

Liberation Day 26 January

Women's Day 8 March

Labour Day 1 May

Martyrs' Day 3 June

Heroes' Day 9 June

Independence Day 9 October

INTERNET ACCESS

Kampala has plenty of places to get an online fix for US\$2000 to US\$4000 per hour. More expensive access is available in Fort Portal, Jinja, Kabale, Mbale and Mbarara.

MAPS

The best available map of Uganda is the Macmillan 1:1,350,000 *Uganda Traveller's Map*, available in bookshops in Kampala.

MEDIA

The daily *New Vision* is the government-owned newspaper. For a more independent view, try *The Monitor*, a daily with good international news.

The BBC World Service broadcasts on 103.7MHz in Kampala.

MONEY

The Ugandan shilling (US\$) is a relatively stable currency. Cash can be changed easily at major banks and foreign exchange (forex)

bureaus. The best banks are Standard Chartered and Barclays Banks. The forex bureaus offer slightly better exchange rates than the banks. At both banks and forex bureaus, small US dollar bills attract a much lower exchange rate than do US\$50 and US\$100 notes, and the rate for travellers cheques is about 2% lower than they are for cash. Exchange rates in Kampala are up to 15% better than is the case elsewhere in the country, so stock up on shillings in the capital.

Standard Chartered Bank has a network of ATMs that accept international credit cards, located at branches in Kampala, as well as in Jinja, Mbale and Mbarara.

For credit-card cash advances, the only realistic option is Barclays Bank in Kampala, which offers advances in US dollars or Uganda shillings. Some hotels and big expenses such as white-water rafting can go on the card.

Bargaining is necessary in informal transactions such as those at markets and roadside stalls, but not in shops that display fixed prices.

POST

The cost of sending a postcard is US\$1.100 to Europe and US\$1.200 to the USA or Australia. There is an efficient poste restante service at the main post office in Kampala.

TELEPHONE & FAX

Local and international telephone calls can be made from UTL and MTN card phones in towns throughout the country; try outside the post office if they aren't obvious. Calls can also be made from privately operated booths, which are useful for short calls if you don't want to buy a card. International calls cost from US\$1 to US\$2 per minute. Mobile phone numbers have a three-digit prefix beginning with 07.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Tourism Uganda is the government-run tourist office in Kampala. The UWA promotes Uganda's national parks and, as well as its headquarters in Kampala, it has offices in major towns and national parks.

There are many excellent community tourism initiatives underway across Uganda. For more on projects that plough proceeds back into the local community, visit the Ucot office (p799) in Kampala.

VISAS

All visitors require visas. Ugandan visas are available at all major land borders and the international airport at Entebbe.

Single-/double-entry visas valid for up to three months cost US\$30/60 (US\$20/40 if you have student ID); 48-hour transit visas cost US\$15. Two photos are required and visas from Ugandan embassies or consulates are normally issued within 24 hours.

Visa Extensions

Extensions are available at the **immigration office** (Map p800; ☎ 244899; Jinja Rd), east of central Kampala.

Visas for Onward Travel

Visas for the following neighbouring countries are available from embassies in Kampala: Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda and Tanzania.

TRANSPORT IN UGANDA

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Located on the shores of Lake Victoria about 40km south of the capital, **Entebbe International Airport** (EBB) is the international gateway to Kampala and Uganda. Entebbe International offers direct connections to Nairobi, Kigali, Dar es Salaam, Addis Ababa, Khartoum, Cairo, Johannesburg, Dubai, London, Amsterdam and Brussels.

Airlines based in Kampala (area code ☎ 041) flying to/from Uganda:

Air Burundi (airline code 8Y; Map p802; ☎ 256137)

Air Tanzania (airline code TC; Map p802; ☎ 345773; www.airtanzania.com)

British Airways (airline code BA; Map p802; ☎ 257414; www.britishairways.com)

EgyptAir (airline code MS; Map p802; ☎ 233960; www.egyptair.com.eg)

Emirates (airline code EK; Map p802; ☎ 349941; www.emirates.com)

Ethiopian Airlines (airline code ET; Map p802; ☎ 254796; www.flyethiopian.com)

DEPARTURE TAX

International departure tax from Entebbe International Airport is a whopping US\$40, but it is included in the ticket.

CROSSING INTO DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO OR SUDAN?

DRC

It is now possible to cross the border into DRC to visit the mountain gorillas at either Djomba or Bukima in Parc National des Virunga. However, much of DRC has been embroiled in a messy civil war for many years, and even with the advent of peace there are still several rival rebel factions roaming the countryside. For this reason, we cannot currently recommend crossing at any border, except the Bunagana crossing, and even in this case, check, check and check again in Kampala and Kisoro.

Sudan

The civil wars in northern Uganda and southern Sudan effectively killed off overland travel. Peace has come to southern Sudan and there is talk of land borders opening again. However, even if southern Sudan is now considered stable, travelling this way involves extensive travel through northern Uganda, the most dangerous region of the country. Do not undertake such a journey without checking the security situation every step of the way.

Gulf Air (airline code GF; Map p802; ☎ 230524; www.gulfairco.com)

Kenya Airways (airline code KQ; Map p802; ☎ 344304; www.kenya-airways.com)

KLM (airline code KL; Map p802; ☎ 344304; www.klm.com)

Rwandair Express (airline code WB; ☎ 232555; www.rwandair.com)

SN Brussels Airline (airline code SN; Map p802; ☎ 234200; www.brusselsairlines.com)

South African Airways (airline code SA; Map p802; ☎ 345772; www.flysaa.com)

Sudan Airways (airline code SD; Map p802; ☎ 230438; www.sudanair.com)

Land

KENYA

The two main border crossings that most overland travellers use are between Tororo in Uganda and Malaba in Kenya, and Busia in Uganda and Kisumu in Kenya.

Akamba (Map p800; ☎ 250412; 28 Dewinton Rd, Kampala), **Busscar** (Map p802; ☎ 233030; 8 Burton St, Kampala), **Regional Coach** (Map p802; ☎ 041-256862; 4 Luwum St, Kampala) and **Scandinavian Express** (Map p802; ☎ 348895; 8 Colville St) bus companies run direct services between Kampala and Nairobi (Kenya) every day. The cost ranges from US\$23,000 to US\$50,000 (depending on the level of luxury), and the trip takes from 12 to 14 hours.

To do the journey in stages, catch a minibus taxi from Kampala to Malaba (US\$9000, three hours), via Jinja and close to Tororo. From Malaba, there are plenty of *matatus* (minibus transport) to Eldoret or Nairobi. There are moneychangers on both sides of the border.

The less frequently used entry point into Kenya is via Busia. Take a minibus taxi from Jinja to Busia (US\$6000, two hours). From the Kenyan side of the border, *matatus* frequently travel to Kisumu.

RWANDA

The main crossing point is between Kabale and Kigali (Rwanda) via Katuna (Uganda) and Gatuna (Rwanda). There's a second crossing between Kisoro (Uganda) and Ruhengeri (Rwanda) via Cyanika in Rwanda.

Those travelling direct between Kampala and Kigali can travel with **Jaguar Executive Coaches** (Map p802; 26 Nakivubo Rd, Kampala), **Regional Coach** (☎ 041-256862; 4 Luwum St, Kampala) or **Gasobus** (☎ 041-572917; Bus Park) Prices start from US\$20,000, most buses leave between 7am and 9am and the journey takes about nine hours. Gasobus departs at 2am and continues to Bujumbura.

From Kabale to Kigali there are lots of minibuses, but the journey involves a change of vehicle at the border. There are minibuses (US\$1000) and special hire taxis (US\$15,000, 30 minutes) to Katuna. On the Rwandan side, there are regular minibuses to Kigali (RFR1500, 1½ hours).

From Kisoro to Ruhengeri via Cyanika, regular minibuses link either side of the border with Kisoro (US\$1000, 12km) and Ruhengeri (RFR500, 25km).

TANZANIA

The route into Tanzania follows the western side of Lake Victoria from Masaka to Bukoba, and it's possible to travel this distance

in less than one day. From Masaka, take a taxi (minibus) to Kyotera (US\$3000, one hour), and then a pick-up to the border at Mutukula (US\$3000, one hour). From the Tanzanian border, take a pick-up to Bukoba.

There used to be passenger services on Lake Victoria between Port Bell (near Kampala) and Mwanza (Tanzania) via Bukoba (Tanzania), but they were discontinued several years ago. Some travellers have managed to book passage to Mwanza (about US\$20,000, 16 hours) on cargo ferries run by **Tanzania Railways** (☎ 041-233384).

GETTING AROUND

Air

Eagle Air and United Airlines offer a limited schedule to obscure parts of northern Uganda.

Boat

The opportunities for travel on Lake Victoria are limited and potentially dangerous because the local boats are small and overcrowded. The only regular transport on the lake is to and around the Ssesse Islands.

Bus

Everywhere in Uganda is linked by minibuses, which are known as 'taxis'. Fares are fixed and often displayed, and there's usually a sign with the destination. Minibus taxis leave when full, and on major routes starting from Kampala this means the official capacity of 14 passengers. However, once beyond the scrutiny of the capital, they soon pack 'em in like sardines.

Ordinary buses also connect the major towns. They're cheaper than minibus taxis and are usually faster, as they don't continually stop to pick up and drop off passengers. Most towns and cities have a bus station/taxi park.

One good way to travel around – but mostly to and from Kampala – is by the post buses run by the Ugandan Postal Service (UPS). Post buses run daily (except Sunday) from Kampala to Fort Portal, Kasese (via Mbarara), Kabale (via Masaka and Mbarara), Soroti (via Mbale) and Hoima (via Masindi).

Car

A number of companies offer vehicles but prices are quite high. Best to forget about them completely and negotiate independently with a 'special hire' taxi driver in the capital. Budget lodges can usually provide a contact.

Roads are good between most major centres in the southern part of the country. In the north, however, minor roads are usually badly potholed, and after heavy rain they become impassable in anything other than a 4WD.

Local Transport

In Kampala and most major towns, bicycles (from US\$500) and motorcycles (from US\$1500), collectively called *boda-bodas*, take passengers. The fares are negotiable. Non-metered 'special hire' taxis are cars available for rent in most Ugandan towns.

Tours

A few reliable companies in Kampala offer tours and safaris to the major places of interest, but the budget safari industry in Uganda is not nearly as well established as it is in Kenya and Tanzania. Costs are generally high.

Afritours & Travel (Map p802; ☎ 041-233596; www.afritourstravel.com; Buganda Rd, Kampala) offers some of the cheapest organised safaris, including Murchison Falls and Queen Elizabeth National Parks.

Train

Uganda's railway network is used only for cargo; there are no passenger services.