



TOUR INFORMATION FOR UGANDA

These notes are designed to help you prepare fully for the tour. Please read carefully.

ENTERING UGANDA: United Kingdom citizens will need a passport which is valid for six months beyond the intended length of stay plus a Tourist Visa. This visa must be applied for individually either in person at the Uganda High Commission, London, or apply for an E-Visa. For an E-Visa, a copy of your passport (bio-data page), Yellow Fever vaccination certificate, and recent passport-size photograph are required, along with the visa fee. Details can be found by clicking on this link:

<http://london.mofa.go.ug/data/smenu/13/Visa-Information.html>

Citizens of other nations should contact the nearest Uganda Diplomatic or Consular Mission for entry requirements.

We recommend that you apply for a visa only within three months of the start of the tour as this is usually valid for entry within 3 months from the date of issue. Please check with your nearest Visa Office for the most up-to-date information.

There are visa service agencies that can provide you with an information pack on how to obtain a visa. They will also process your application for you however they will charge a handling and processing fee. One such company is The Visaservice www.visaservice.co.uk

It is always a good idea to take a photocopy of your passport and air ticket with you when travelling abroad. They can prove invaluable in helping you get replacements if your originals are lost or stolen. Obviously you should keep the photocopies in a separate bag to the originals.

TIME DIFFERENCE: Uganda is 2 hours ahead of British Summer Time (BST).

CURRENCY: The currency is the Uganda shilling (UGX). Uganda shillings cannot be brought in or taken out of the country, but money can be changed easily at the airport (probably the best place to do it), our hotel in Entebbe, and at a few other lodges during the tour. Credit cards are accepted in Entebbe, but not in outlying areas. ATMs are not readily available. The tour price includes all travel, hotel and main meal costs, so you need only bring enough money to cover items of a personal nature.

Our ground agent tells us that US Dollar notes **MUST** be dated 2007 or newer and must be in good condition, not torn etc. otherwise, they will not be accepted for exchange. Larger notes always attract a better exchange rate and travellers cheques the worst possible rate. Travellers cheques can be difficult to cash, as well, so we don't recommend them. Credit cards should not be relied upon, except at major hotels in Entebbe, and then only Visa/MasterCard. Local currency is preferred for all purchases.

LANGUAGE: English and Swahili are widely spoken.

CLIMATE: Despite its proximity to the equator, much of Uganda feels anything but tropical, and many people are not prepared for how chilly it can be. Tour elevations vary from 3,280 ft. to about 8,000 ft. and highland days can be quite cool if there is cloud cover. It can get quite cold at our camp at 8,000 feet. However, when the sun shines it can conversely get considerably warmer. Humidity is low. Rain is possible almost anywhere but we will probably only experience it in the highland areas and even then it is unlikely to be prolonged.

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ALTITUDE: The tour reaches an altitude of about 8,000 feet in Bwindi Impenetrable National Park.

PACE OF TOUR AND DAILY ROUTINE: There are a few travelling days where long drives are required and you should be prepared to spend a little more time in the vehicle than you would on tours to other countries. As each vehicle has roof hatches and each person has a window seat, this is not as daunting as it might first appear. The leader will organise a seating rotation so that all tour participants move to a different seat each day.

There are some long walks on this tour. One, at Ruhija, takes almost all day and involves a descent from a starting elevation of about 8,000 feet to an elevation of about 6,000 feet, followed by a return climb to our starting point. In places, the going can be hard. Porters will be available to carry bags on this trek. A reasonable to good degree of physical fitness is required to take part on all the walks.

Gorilla Tracking Permit at Bwindi (Day 6): As of 15 June 2017, permits to see gorillas cost around £500 per person. The Gorilla Tracking Permit price is subject to change and is not included in the tour price, partly due to the possibility of pricing changes but also because the trek can be rigorous and not everyone will choose to do it. This **optional** trek can take anywhere from 3 or 6 hours and the off-trail terrain can vary from moderate to difficult, depending on where the gorillas are that day. The hike will likely be between 1-4 miles roundtrip and may lose and regain an elevation of 1000 feet or more. There is an option to hire porters at an extra cost of about £13 per day to carry your bags and help you to negotiate the more difficult parts of the trek.

Please let us know when you register if you want a permit, as we need to obtain it at the time of booking. The final cost of the permit will be billed to you when the tour is invoiced. It is worth noting that neighbouring Rwanda has recently doubled the price of its gorilla permit, but so far Uganda hasn't followed suit. If you opt out of gorilla tracking you will be able to go birding with one of the leaders, though it's likely you won't add any additional species.

Chimpanzee Tracking Permit at Kibale (Day 11): The permit for this is **included** in the tour cost based on prices as of 15 June 2017. This permit is included because a morning chimpanzee tracking session is also our best chance to see Green-breasted Pitta. We'll start with a pre-dawn visit to a known site for the pitta, and if our luck holds we'll encounter this bird before moving down the trail to look for chimps (by following their vocalizations). The chimp trek is another that involves an indeterminate length of walk over uneven terrain. The chimps range widely in their habitat and may move while the tour group is with them; in essence forcing the group into a hike behind the chimps at their walking speed. Or, the chimps may stay in one spot once found making for a shorter walk. The habitat tends to not be as steep as for the gorilla trek, but hikers should be prepared anyway.

Most days will finish at dusk and we try to allow a one-hour break before we meet to do the daily checklist and have dinner. On a few days this break may be shorter or longer depending on the schedule. There may be some nights when we go out after dinner to look for night-birds, although we are not permitted to leave the compounds in the national parks.

HEALTH: It is essential that you contact your own doctor to obtain the latest information on the regions you are visiting. Please contact your doctor well in advance of your tour's departure as some medication must be initiated weeks before the period of possible exposure.

Malaria: It is recommended that you take a malaria preventative. You should contact your doctor as to which drugs would be best suit you. Useful information on all aspects of malaria, including how to reduce your chances of being bitten can be found at the website:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/malaria/prevention>

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It is further recommended that you have the following vaccines (see your doctor at least 4-6 weeks before your trip to allow time for vaccines to take effect): Hepatitis A or immune globulin (IG); typhoid; **yellow fever**; and as needed, booster doses for tetanus-diphtheria, measles, and a one-time dose of polio vaccine for adults.

Yellow Fever: Uganda requires that all visitors hold a Yellow Fever vaccination certificate - it will be checked upon your arrival into Entebbe. Technically this card is also required to leave the country but is unlikely to be checked.

Miscellaneous: Uganda is remarkably free of biting insects although mosquitoes (which are mainly active at night) and ticks occur locally and Tsetse flies can also be irritating at Murchison Falls. We recommend using insect repellents with a high concentration of DEET. Care must be taken, however, to avoid getting the DEET repellent on optical equipment as DEET dissolves rubber and plastic and can damage coated lenses. Camping supply stores carry some reasonably effective alternatives, which contain natural products and aren't corrosive.

Products containing tick-repelling chemicals are particularly effective. Camping supply stores sell such a product containing permethrin 0.5%, which must be applied directly to clothing in advance of wearing and allowed to dry. This non-staining, odourless chemical is non-toxic to humans and protective on clothing through several launderings.

While water can be safe to drink biologically, the high mineral content can be physically disruptive, so it is best avoided. Most lodges provide bottled water in the rooms. There will be some opportunities to purchase bottled water from supermarkets etc. where it will be cheaper. Soda water, soft drinks and beer are ubiquitous and safe to drink.

Mild stomach upsets can occur in Uganda and we strongly suggest bringing an adequate supply of a diarrhoea treatment such as Imodium. Electrolyte-replacement drinks in powder form are also worth bringing as they replace the vital salts and minerals lost.

It may be difficult to obtain any special medication during the tour, so bring all you are likely to need.

For further information on health advice refer to the Medical Advisory Services for Travellers Abroad website www.masta-travel-health.com

ACCOMMODATION: We will stay in a variety of hotels, lodges and tented camps of generally good quality. Lodging standards in much of Uganda have risen dramatically in the past few years. All lodges on this tour provides mosquito nets around the beds, with the exception of the higher altitude lodges in Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, where mosquitos are not an issue. Hotels and lodges also normally spray rooms to keep insects down. Some of the lodges such as Gorilla Mist Camp have limited hours of electricity due to the use of generators for power. Keep this in mind if you need power for a device such as a CPAP machine for sleeping.

LAUNDRY: Laundry services are available at all the lodges where we stay for two nights or more.

ELECTRICITY: 220/240V AC 50Hz. Sockets vary from requiring 13 amp square pin plugs (the same as in the UK) to 2-round pin types. An international travel plug may be useful and can be bought in most airport departure lounges. You may find the following website helpful: <http://www.power-plugs-sockets.com>

All the lodges and hotels we stay at have electricity 24 hours a day. The tented camps have generators that operate mainly during the early evening through to late at night and again during the early morning.

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FOOD: The food throughout the tour is generally good to excellent and many people are surprised at the high standard provided, even in the remoter parts of the country. Breakfasts are buffets offering everything from full cooked meals to cereals and fresh fruit. At other meals there is almost always a choice of two or three main courses. Vegetarians are well catered for.

Sunbird tours are all-inclusive and no refunds can be issued for any tour meals participants choose to miss. While we will try to do all we can to accommodate the requirements of all participants, please note that we cannot guarantee all causes of food allergies can be avoided at every destination. Many restaurants offer set menus and are unable to accommodate all special requests within a group. Thus, participants with significant food allergies or special dietary needs should bring appropriate foods with them for those times when their needs can, regrettably, not be accommodated. Our tours are carefully scheduled to insure the best possible birding experience and although the leaders will do all they can to make sure the group eats at a reasonable time, sometimes early or late lunches and/or evening meals cannot be avoided. Any participants who need to eat at specific times may need to bring supplemental food with them.

DRINKS: Bottled water, a soft drink or a beer (but not wine or spirits on this tour) are provided at lunch and dinner, as is coffee or tea. In addition, we keep a supply of bottled water on the tour vehicles. Bottled or filtered water is usually provided in the rooms we stay.

INTERNET AND MOBILE PHONE ACCESS: Most lodges have WiFi for at least a couple hours in the evening but service is very slow (when it works) and is generally only available in the lobby area. Don't count on daily connectivity to the outside world. Faster internet is available at the Entebbe airport. Mobile phone access is good almost everywhere.

FIELD CLOTHING: Dress will be informal throughout. See section on Climate. The higher altitudes and the possibility of rain, coupled with the potential for cool early mornings mean that you should bring clothing suitable for cool and wet conditions.

A lightweight sweater should be adequate for some of the cool evenings and a lightweight jacket for cutting wind and will be useful for early mornings and at high altitude. Some lighter and loose-fitting field clothing will be useful when it starts to warm up, and a sun hat is essential. While shorts and sandals are fine, they are not always suitable for the field because of prickly vegetation. Please bring clothing of subdued colours, especially for our times in the various forests.

Forest trails can at times be wet and slippery so while lightweight walking shoes or boots should be adequate for much of the tour, you may want to take good hiking boots with ankle support and good tread. These will be essential for anyone taking part in the Gorilla trek. If you are taking part in the trek, you may also want to bring some thick gloves – a pair of gardening gloves will be ideal. This is because you may need to grab hold of vegetation during the trek, some of which can be prickly.

MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS: You may find these useful.

Notebook and pencil
Small daypack
Torch or head torch
Water bottle/canteen
Small folding umbrella
Insect repellent

Alarm clock
Sunglasses
Sunscreen
Plastic bags
Personal medication

Optional: Telescope & tripod are an advantage when we are birding away from the vehicles for any length of time; camera, memory cards, spare binoculars and spare spectacles (in case of loss or damage), field guide. Although we do a lot of watching from the open top of the tour vehicles, bean bags are provided to use as a telescope rest.

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Note: The most effective insect repellents are those containing at least 35% of the active ingredient diethyltoluamide (DEET). The higher the percentage, the greater the effectiveness. However, care must be taken to avoid getting the repellent on to optical equipment as it dissolves rubber and plastic and can damage coated lenses. A reasonably effective alternative, which isn't corrosive, is Mosi-guard, produced by MASTA, and we recommend this. It is available in most high street chemist (including those at the airport). Camping supply stores sell a product containing permethrin 0.5%, which must be applied directly to clothing in advance of wearing and allowed to dry. This non-staining, odourless chemical is non-toxic to humans and protective on clothing through several launderings. Please make sure you never to spray insect repellent inside the vehicle or when you are standing close to other participants – it may drift on to their optical equipment.

LUGGAGE: Our Final Information document, which will be sent to you approximately three weeks before departure, will give details about baggage weight and size restrictions imposed by the airline used for this tour.

Bring what you need but consider carefully the utility of each item. We insist that you bring soft luggage, (rather than hard shell 'Samsonite bags) as it is more easily packed into the vehicles, which have limited space for luggage. Our leader(s) will help with luggage if they can, but please do not expect them to carry excessively heavy bags. Please do not bring any bag that is so heavy that you are unable to lift and carry it yourself. Please bring two smaller, lighter bags rather than one very heavy one or alternately pack a light-weight duffel in your big bag and redistribute your gear once you join the tour.

Seating space in the vehicles is adequate but not roomy so please try to keep hand luggage brought into the vehicles to a minimum.

As a reminder, do not pack important medicines in checked luggage; always carry them in your carry-on luggage. Conversely, remember to pack sharp, pointed items, such as pocket knives, etc., in your checked luggage.

As a general rule, in addition to using your Sunbird luggage tags, it is a good idea to affix identification to the inside of each piece of luggage.

LEADER'S EQUIPMENT: The leader will provide the following:

Telescope & tripod

Field guides & reference books

Laser pointer

First-aid kit

Playback equipment

PHOTOGRAPHY: Uganda offers abundant photographic opportunities. Remember to bring adequate batteries, memory cards and a charger suitable for your rechargeable batteries. As many good shots will come through vehicle windows or roof hatches, cameras must be ready to use. A beanbag for resting the camera on is a very useful piece of equipment and these are provided by the ground agent although you may also wish to bring your own. If you wish to digiscope please make sure you have your own telescope for this – the leaders telescope is not available for this purpose.

Although there will be occasions when bird photography is possible, and many of the birds are usually quite approachable, a birdwatching tour is not normally the best means of pursuing this aim. If you are a serious photographer please do not let your photographic activities adversely affect others. This is particularly true when we are birding from the confines of the tour vehicle.

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TRANSPORT: Transportation will be in long wheel-base Toyota Landcruiser or Nissan Patrol-type vehicles with opening roof hatches for window-free viewing and photography. Our drivers are professionals, skilled at finding birds and mammals, and at repairing vehicles. Some of the driving is on unpaved roads and while most of these are in good condition there are some bad sections. In most National Parks leaving the vehicles is prohibited. Each person will have a window seat and the roof hatches are helpful, but come prepared to spend an unusual amount of time in the vehicles. Please note that the leader will operate a rotation system for seating in the vehicles.

SMOKING: Our tours are non-smoking events and we find that most of our tour participants prefer a smoke-free environment. We request therefore that participants do not smoke, or use electronic cigarettes, whenever the group is gathered together, in the tour vehicle, or inside any buildings. This includes not smoking during short stops while travelling in the vehicle. You can, of course, smoke in your hotel room as long as it is inside a smoking-room, and you are not sharing with someone you do not know.

TRAVEL INSURANCE: Travel insurance is essential and we insist that you take out suitable cover as soon as your tour is booked. If you are bringing expensive optical equipment or other valuable items, please make sure they are also adequately insured on your home contents policy, as most travel insurance policies do not cover very expensive individual items. You may wish to consult your insurance broker regarding coverage. Please also ensure that your policy covers you in the event of a medical emergency, cancellation of a trip or severe delays. Medical costs abroad can often be extremely expensive. Please note that Sunbird is not liable for any medical or repatriation costs resulting from injury or illness during a tour or for covering any costs resulting from a flight delay such as extra hotel accommodation.

If you wish, insurance can be arranged by Helen Fisher, Bullerwell Independent Insurance Brokers, 13 Goldington Road, Bedford, MK40 3JY. Tel: 01234-866964. Please contact Helen for a quote and she will send the schedule directly to you.

TIPPING: All tour-based tips are included in the tour price. These include tips to local guides, drivers, hotel porters, and waiters and waitresses. You only need to pay tips for personal services such as room service or drinks from the bar.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Field Guides:

Stevenson, T. and J. Fanshawe, et al. 2002. *Field Guide to the Birds of East Africa*. Academic Press. An excellent guide to the region, this is now the standard book for East Africa covering all of Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi. **Highly recommended.**

Note: An e-book version of the above field guide, the e-Guide to the Birds of East Africa, is available from the Apple "Apps Store for (at least) iPhone and iPad and, generally, from mydigitalearth.com at <http://www.mydigitalearth.com/mde/Default.aspx?alias=www.mydigitalearth.com/mde/digital>. This also contains recordings of nearly every species, and is a great learning tool.

Van Perlo, B. 1995. *Collins Illustrated Checklist: Birds of East Africa*. HarperCollins, London. ISBN 0-00-219937-8. A pocket-sized comprehensive illustrated checklist that illustrates all of East Africa's birds in colour and has distribution maps. Some of the illustrations are rather small and basic, the text is brief, and some of the English names used differ from those in other books and are therefore rather confusing. If you like to carry a book in the field this is the one to use, but in all other situations Stevenson and Fanshawe is **our recommended bird guide**.

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Ornithological References:

Brown, L., K. Newman and E. Urban. 1982 onwards. *The Birds of Africa*. (8 volumes). Academic Press, London. Six volumes of this monumental work have been published so far, covering all of the non-passerines and some of the passerines. They contain a wealth of information as well as superb color plates of every species. Too bulky to bring on the tour, but well worth referring to before and after the trip.

Zimmerman, D. A., Turner, D. A., Pearson, D. J. 1996. *Birds of Kenya and Northern Tanzania*. A&C Black, London. ISBN 0-7136-3968-7. Despite being rather bulky, this book stands as an excellent guide. Although many of the species occur in Uganda, some do not and as such this book is not comprehensive. There is a lightweight shortened paperback version available.

Mammals:

Kingdon, J. *The Kingdon Pocket Guide to African Mammals*. 2004. A&C Black, London. ISBN 0-7136-6981-0. A pocket-sized version of the popular field guide which is much more 'user-friendly'. It contains the same illustrations and maps, but with less text. Also available as an E-book. **Recommended.**

Foley, C & L, Lobora, A. *A Field Guide to the Larger Mammals of Tanzania*. 2014. PUP/WildGuides. ISBN-13:9780691161174. The definitive, most up-to-date field guide which covers many mammals found in Uganda. Detailed species accounts, each illustrated with colour photographs.

OBTAINING BOOKS: Most of the field guides and the major ornithological references in print are available by mail order from booksellers specialising in natural history titles.

Natural History Book Service Ltd
Tel: 01803 865913
www.nhbs.co.uk

WildSounds
Tel: 01263 741100
www.wildsounds.co.uk

MAPS: Maps of the region may be available from:

The Map Shop
Tel: 01684 593146
www.themapshop.co.uk

Stanfords
Tel: 020 7836 1321
www.stanfords.co.uk

AFRICAN BIRD CLUB: Please support this charity which aims to raise money to support conservation projects, encourages an interest in the conservation of birds, and liaises with and promotes the work of existing societies within the region. You will find their contact details and further information about the Club at www.africanbirdclub.org

FINAL INFORMATION: Final information with instructions for meeting the group, hotel addresses etc., and your air tickets will be sent out about three weeks before the start of the tour. If you have any questions about the trip, please contact us.