COUNTRY DESCRIPTION: Uganda is a landlocked, developing country in central eastern Africa. Infrastructure is adequate in Kampala, the capital, but is limited in other areas. Read the Department of State Background Notes on Uganda for additional information.

REGISTRATION / EMBASSY LOCATION: U.S. citizens living or traveling in Uganda are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate at the Department of State’s travel registration page in order to obtain updated information on local travel and security. U.S. citizens without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. Registration is important; it allows the State Department to assist U.S. citizens in an emergency.

Local embassy information is available below and at the Department of State’s list of embassies and consulates.

US Embassy Uganda
1577 Ggaba Road
Kampala, Uganda
256-414-259-791 or
256-414-306-001
256-414-258-451 Facsimile
(add 011 prefix when dialing from the US)

ENTRY/EXIT REQUIREMENTS: Entry into Uganda requires a passport valid for three months beyond the date of entry, a visa, evidence of a yellow fever vaccination, and a polio vaccination for children under five. Visas are available at Entebbe Airport upon arrival or may be obtained from the Embassy of the Republic of Uganda. The current fee for a three month tourist visa obtained upon arrival at Entebbe Airport is $50.00. Travelers should be aware that a visa does not determine how long a person may remain in Uganda. The Ugandan immigration officer at the port of entry will determine the length of authorized stay, which is generally from one to three months as a tourist. Extensions of duration of stay may be requested at Ugandan immigration headquarters on Jinja Road in Kampala. Airline companies may also require travelers to have a visa before boarding. Travelers should obtain the latest information and details from the Embassy of the Republic of Uganda at 5911 16th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20011; telephone (202) 726-7100. Travelers may also contact the Ugandan Permanent Mission to the United Nations, telephone (212) 949-0110. Overseas, inquiries may be made at the nearest Ugandan embassy or consulate. Visit the Embassy of Uganda’s website for the most current visa information.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Uganda.

Information about dual nationality or the prevention of international child abduction can be found on our website. For further information about customs regulations, please read our Customs Information page.

THREATS TO SAFETY AND SECURITY: U.S. citizens residing in or planning to visit Uganda should be aware of threats to their safety posed by insurgent groups operating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and southern Sudan, and the potential of cross border attacks carried out by these armed groups. In addition, U.S. citizens traveling to the area commonly known as Karamoja in northeastern Uganda should also be aware of ongoing conflict and armed banditry in this region.
Northern Uganda: After years of conflict, relative stability has returned to northern Uganda with the departure of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) insurgent group in 2006. LRA attacks on civilian populations have occurred more recently in the neighboring Central African Republic and southern Sudan. The Governments of Uganda, the DRC, and southern Sudan initiated joint military operations against LRA bases in Garamba National Park on December 14, 2008, after LRA leader Joseph Kony refused to sign a peace agreement following two years of negotiations. These military operations continue and in order to deter an LRA return to Uganda, the Uganda Peoples Defense Force (UPDF) maintains a significant presence in the northern districts. Given the continued threat to regional security posed by the LRA, U.S. citizens should exercise caution when traveling in those districts of northwestern Uganda that border the DRC and southern Sudan and which could potentially be subject to LRA incursions. The Ugandan Government also continues to expand and improve the capacity of the civilian police force in northern Uganda by deploying additional personnel and concentrating resources to further recovery and re-development activities throughout the north.

Travelers also find that there is a general lack of infrastructure throughout northern Uganda, and services such as emergency medical care are inadequate. Given crime and other security concerns in northern Uganda, U.S. citizens are strongly advised to restrict travel to primary roads and during daylight hours only.

Cattle rustling, armed banditry, and attacks on vehicles are very common in the Karamoja region of northeastern Uganda, and the UPDF continues to implement a program to disarm Karamojong warriors. Past incidents have included ambushes of UPDF troops, and attacks on vehicles, residences, and towns that resulted in multiple deaths. Most of the violence occurred in the districts of Kaabong, Kotido, and Abim, although some violent incidents also occurred in Moroto and Nakapiripirit Districts. U.S. citizens are advised to avoid travel to the Karamoja region given the frequent insecurity. Any travel to Karamoja (excluding charter flights to Kidepo National Park) by U.S. Embassy personnel must first be authorized by the Chief of Mission.

Southwestern Uganda: U.S. citizens traveling in southwestern Uganda should be aware of the historical conflict in the districts of North and South Kivu in the DRC, and the close proximity of fighting to the Ugandan border. During spikes in the conflict, refugee flows across the border number in the thousands and there is also a risk of incursions by armed combatants. U.S. citizens should review the Travel Warning for the Democratic Republic of the Congo at www.travel.state.gov for the most up-to-date information regarding the conflict in the DRC.

On August 8, 2007, a group of armed assailants entered Uganda from the DRC and raided Butogota, a town in Kanungu District, southwestern Uganda. Three Ugandans were killed and many others assaulted during the raid. Ugandan officials believe that the perpetrators of the attack were members of one of the various militia groups operating in the southeastern region of the DRC or possibly remnants of the "Interahamwe," a group that participated in the 1994 genocide in Rwanda and was also responsible for the 1999 attack in Bwindi Impenetrable Forest National Park. The 1999 Bwindi attack killed four Ugandans and eight foreign tourists. Butogota is in an area transited by tourists traveling to Bwindi, a popular gorilla-trekking destination. Within Bwindi Impenetrable National Forest Park, armed security personnel accompany tourists on the daily gorilla hikes and the UPDF maintains a military presence. At Ishasha Camp, another popular tourist destination located in the southern sector of Queen Elizabeth National Park, the UPDF also maintains a small military base near the park headquarters for security purposes.

Eastern Uganda: In February 2008, an isolated incident occurred in Mount Elgon National Park in eastern Uganda that resulted in the death of a foreign tourist. A Belgian tourist climbing Mt. Elgon in the company of park rangers was shot and killed. The attack occurred while the group was camped for the night and assailants fired into the campsite. The tourist was reportedly struck by gunfire when
exiting her tent in the darkness. Ugandan security and park officials suspected that the attack was perpetrated by smugglers engaged in cattle rustling or other illicit activities that are common in the border area.

Demonstrations: In September 2009, three days of violent demonstrations broke out within Kampala that left over 25 dead and 100 injured before security services brought the demonstrations under control with tear gas and live gun fire that dispersed the violent demonstrators.

Demonstrations take place in Kampala and other Ugandan cities from time to time in response to world events or local developments. In most cases, these demonstrations occur with no warning and demonstrations intended to be peaceful can turn confrontational and possibly violent. U.S. citizens are therefore urged to avoid the areas of demonstrations if possible, and to exercise caution if they find themselves in the vicinity of any demonstration. U.S. citizens should stay current with media coverage of local events and be aware of their surroundings at all times. Because many demonstrations are spontaneous events, the U.S. Embassy may not always be able to alert U.S. citizens that a demonstration is taking place and to avoid a specific area. If employed with an institution or other large organization, U.S. citizens may find it helpful to request that local employees notify expatriates when they learn of a demonstration from local radio reports or other sources. Recent protests have occurred over land disputes involving Kampala market areas, university closures and strikes, opposition political party demonstrations, and protests by taxi drivers over the enforcement of traffic regulations.

For the latest security information, U.S. citizens traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs website, which contains current the Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts as well as the Worldwide Caution.

Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free within the U.S. and Canada, or by calling a regular toll line, 1-202-501-4444, from other countries. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

The Department of State urges U.S. citizens to take responsibility for their own personal security while traveling overseas. For general information about appropriate measures travelers can take to protect themselves in an overseas environment, see the Department of State’s extensive tips and advice on traveling safely abroad.

**CRIME:** Crimes such as pick pocketing, purse snatching, and thefts from hotels and parked vehicles or vehicles stalled in traffic jams are common. The Embassy receives frequent reports of theft of items from locked vehicles, even when the stolen items were secured out of sight and the vehicle was parked in an area patrolled by uniformed security personnel. Pick pocketing and the theft of purses and bags is also very common on public transportation. Armed robberies of pedestrians also occur, sometimes during daylight hours and in public places. Although infrequent, the Embassy also receives reports of armed carjackings and highway robbery. In May 2007, two U.S. citizens reported an attempted robbery when they were traveling near the town of Bugiri in eastern Uganda. The pair reported that a second vehicle with at least one armed assailant tried to stop their vehicle by forcing it off the road. This incident occurred during daylight hours. On June 27, 2007, two U.S. citizens were robbed and held at gunpoint when the vehicle transporting them to Entebbe Airport was stopped by a group of armed men. This incident occurred during the early morning hours on Entebbe Road. Although some of these attacks are violent, victims are generally injured only if they resist. U.S. Embassy employees are advised against using roads at night, especially in areas outside the limits of cities and large towns. Home burglaries also do occur and sometimes turn violent. In April 2008, the Ugandan police reported an increase in armed robberies in the Kampala neighborhoods of Bukoto,
Kisaasi, Kiwatule, Naalya, Najera, and Ntinda. Several of these robberies occurred as the victims were arriving at their residences after nightfall and the assailants struck as they were entering their residential compounds.

Women traveling alone are particularly susceptible to crime. In November 2009 alone, there were two reported violent sexual assaults against expatriate females. The victims were single passengers on one of the common modes of public transport known as "boda boda" motorcycle taxis. Due to inherent traffic and crime risks associated with boda bodas, U.S. Mission employees and their dependents are strongly discouraged from using them during daylight hours and prohibited from doing so after dark. If the victim of a sexual assault, seek medical assistance and counseling immediately regarding prophylactic treatment to help prevent the transmission of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. A list of local medical providers can be found on the U.S. Embassy website.

U.S. citizens visiting Uganda are advised not to accept food or drink offered from a stranger, even a child, because such food may contain narcotics used to incapacitate a victim and facilitate a robbery or sexual assault. In addition, patrons of bars, casinos, nightclubs, and other entertainment centers should never leave their drink or food unattended. When visiting such establishments, it is advisable to remain with a group of friends as single individuals are more likely to be targeted. Victims have included female patrons who reported they were drugged, and taken to another location and sexually assaulted. Robberies have been facilitated on public transportation under similar circumstances. In 2006, a U.S. citizen traveling by bus from Kenya to Uganda was incapacitated and robbed on the bus when the passenger accepted a sealed beverage from a fellow traveler. Expatriates traveling by bus to the popular tourist destination of Bwindi Impenetrable National Forest in southwest Uganda were also incapacitated and robbed when they accepted snacks from fellow bus passengers.

There has been a recent, marked increase in financial crime, including fraud involving wire transfers, credit cards, checks, and advance fee fraud perpetrated via email. The U.S. Embassy recommends using money orders for all fund transfers and protecting all bank account and personally identifiable information such as social security numbers and other types of information.

An increasing number of U.S. exporters (primarily vendors of expensive consumer goods such as computers, stereo equipment, and electronics) have been targeted by a sophisticated check fraud scheme. A fictitious company in Uganda locates a vendor on the Internet, makes e-mail contact to order goods, and pays with a third-party check. The checks, written on U.S. accounts and made out to entities in Uganda for small amounts, are intercepted, chemically "washed" and presented for payment of the goods with the U.S. vendor as payee and an altered amount. If the goods are shipped before the check clears, the U.S. shipper will have little recourse, as the goods are picked up at the airport and the company cannot be traced. U.S. companies receiving orders from Uganda are encouraged to check with the Political - Economic Section of the Embassy to verify the legitimacy of the company. The Embassy strongly cautions U.S. vendors against accepting third-party checks as payment for any goods to be shipped to Uganda.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines.

**VICTIMS OF CRIME:** If you are the victim of a crime abroad, you should contact the local police and the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate (see the Department of State's list of embassies and consulates). This includes the loss or theft of a U.S. passport. The embassy/consulate staff can, for example, help you find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds may be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime are solely the
responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Uganda is 999.

Please see our information on victims of crime, including possible victim compensation programs in the United States.

**CRIMINAL PENALTIES**: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country’s laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime prosecutable in the United States. Persons violating Uganda's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested, or imprisoned. Penalties for possessing, using, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Uganda are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines.

**SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES**: Please note that U.S. currency notes in $20 and $50 denominations are exchanged at a lower rate than $100 currency notes. In addition, travelers often find that they cannot exchange or use U.S. currency printed earlier than the year 2000. Travelers who find they cannot pay for accommodation or expenses often must request that friends or family wire money to them in Uganda. There are offices that facilitate Western Union, MoneyGram, and other types of money transfers in Kampala and other cities throughout the country. ATMs are available in Uganda, particularly in downtown Kampala, but usually only customers who have an account with a specific Ugandan bank may use them. A few machines function with overseas accounts.

The U.S. Embassy frequently receives requests from U.S. citizens to verify the bona fides of nongovernmental (NGO) and charity organizations operating in Uganda. The Embassy is unable to provide information regarding the bona fides of these organizations and U.S. citizens traveling to Uganda to work for an organization are encouraged to request that the charity provide references of past volunteers whom they may contact. U.S. citizens have also reported intimidation and harassment by directors of organizations, when they questioned the organization's activities or use of donated funds. While the vast majority of NGOs operating in Uganda are legitimate organizations aiding development efforts, there have been reports from concerned U.S. citizens regarding the suspected diversion of charity funds for personal gain, etc.

Ugandan Customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning the importation of pets. A Ugandan import permit is required, along with an up-to-date rabies vaccination certificate and a veterinary certificate of health issued by a USDA-approved veterinarian no more than thirty days before arrival. Travelers are advised to contact the Ugandan Embassy in the United States for specific information regarding customs requirements. Please see our information on Customs Information.

Photography in tourist locations is permitted. However, taking pictures of military/police installations or personnel is prohibited. Military and police officers have detained tourists for taking photographs of Entebbe Airport and of the area around Owen Falls Dam, near Jinja, although the prohibition on taking photographs is not publicly displayed on signs.

The U.S. Embassy receives frequent inquiries from U.S. citizens wishing to register a nongovernmental organization (NGO) in Uganda. Information about registering an NGO can be obtained from the Ugandan NGO Board which has offices within the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The NGO Board can be reached on phone number: 256 414 341 556. One of the requirements for
registering an NGO is that a foreign national employee or volunteer must provide a Certificate of Good Conduct/Criminal Background Check. The U.S. Embassy Kampala cannot provide a Certificate of Good Conduct or Criminal Background Check. U.S. citizens intending to travel to Uganda as an employee of an NGO or who plan to register an NGO should obtain a Certificate of Good Conduct from their local police or the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) before departing the United States. More information on how to obtain a Criminal Background Check can be found on the FBI website.

MEDICAL FACILITIES AND HEALTH INFORMATION: Medical facilities in Uganda, including Kampala, are limited and not equipped to handle most emergencies, especially those requiring surgery. Outside Kampala, hospitals are scarce and offer only basic services. Recently, U.S. citizens involved in automobile accidents required immediate evacuation from Uganda as surgery could not be performed due to insufficient blood supplies at the hospital where they sought treatment. Equipment and medicines are often in short supply or unavailable. Travelers should carry their own supplies of prescription drugs and preventive medicines. A list of medical providers is available at the U.S. Embassy.

Malaria is prevalent in Uganda. Travelers who become ill with a fever or flu-like illness while traveling in a malaria-risk area and up to one year after returning home should seek prompt medical attention and tell the physician their travel history and what antimalarials they have been taking. For additional information on malaria, including protective measures, see the CDC Travelers' Health website.

Due to a polio outbreak, children under the age of five crossing from endemic neighboring countries such as Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan and Kenya (as well as Nigeria, India and Pakistan where the disease is also prevalent), may be required to receive an oral polio drop vaccination upon entry if not already vaccinated.

Tuberculosis is an increasingly serious health concern in Uganda. For further information, please consult the CDC’s Travel Notice on TB.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC website. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad, consult the infectious diseases section of the World Health Organization (WHO) website. The WHO website also contains additional health information for travelers, including detailed country-specific health information.

MEDICAL INSURANCE: The Department of State strongly urges U.S. citizens to consult their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to determine whether the policy applies overseas and whether it covers emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. For more information, please see our medical insurance overseas page.

TRAFFIC SAFETY AND ROAD CONDITIONS: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Uganda is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Most inter-city transportation in Uganda is by small van or large bus. Many drivers of these vehicles have little training and some are reckless. Small vans and large buses are often poorly maintained, travel at high speeds, and are the principal vehicles involved in the many deadly single and multi-vehicle accidents along Ugandan roads. Accident victims have included U.S. citizens traveling in small vans and personal cars, passengers on motorcycle taxis locally known as "boda bodas" (see Crime above) and pedestrians. Large trucks on the highways are often overloaded, with inadequately
secured cargo and poor braking systems. Alcohol frequently is a contributing factor in road accidents, particularly at night. Drivers are advised to take extra care when driving. Nighttime driving and road transportation should be avoided whenever possible. Pedestrians often walk in the roads and may not be visible to motorists. Large branches or rocks in the road sometimes indicate an upcoming obstruction or other hazard. Highway travel at night is particularly dangerous, including the road between Entebbe Airport and Kampala. The Embassy recommends caution on this road and use of a reliable taxi service to and from the airport.

Traffic accidents draw crowds. Ugandan law requires that the drivers stop and exchange information and assist any injured persons. In some cases where serious injury has occurred, there is the possibility of mob anger. In these instances, Ugandans often do not get out of their cars, but drive to the nearest police station to report the accident.

Please refer to our Road Safety page for more information. For specific information concerning Ugandan driving permits, vehicle inspection, road tax and mandatory insurance, please contact the Uganda Tourist Board, IPS building, 14, Parliament Avenue, Kampala, Uganda; telephone 256-414-342 196, or, consult the information on "Getting There and Getting Around" on the MyUganda web site.

**AVIATION SAFETY OVERSIGHT:** As there is no direct commercial air service to the United States by carriers registered in Uganda, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed the government of Uganda’s Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. Further information may be found on the FAA’s safety assessment page.

**CHILDREN’S ISSUES:** Please see our Office of Children’s Issues web pages on intercountry adoption and international parental child abduction.

This replaces the Country Specific Information for Uganda dated March, 2, 2009 to update sections on Registration/Embassy Location, Entry Exit Requirements, Threats to Safety and Security, Crime, and Medical Facilities and Health Information.