January 18, 2011

1. COUNTRY DESCRIPTION: Uganda is a landlocked, developing republic in central eastern Africa. Tourist facilities abound, but while infrastructure is adequate in Kampala, the capital, it is limited in other areas. Read the Department of State Background Notes on Uganda for additional information.

SMART TRAVELER ENROLLMENT PROGRAM (STEP)/EMBASSY LOCATION: If you are going to live in or visit Uganda, please take the time to tell our Embassy about your trip. If you enroll, we can keep you up to date with important safety and security announcements. It will also help your friends and family get in touch with you in an emergency. Here’s the link to the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program.

Embassy of the United States of America

1577 Ggaba Road, Kampala

Telephone: 256-414-259-791 or 256-414-306-001

Facsimile: 256-414-258-451

ENTRY/EXIT REQUIREMENTS FOR U.S. CITIZENS: A passport valid for six months beyond the date of entry, visa, evidence of yellow fever vaccination, as well as polio vaccination for children under five are required. 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. Note: For visitors who remain in Uganda on a visa that is no longer valid, Ugandan immigration has been known to impose a fine of up to $30 per day for each day the traveler is out of status, or they may be detained until the fine is paid. 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. Visit the Embassy of the Republic of Uganda’s website for the most current visa information. Travelers may also contact the Permanent Mission of Uganda to the United Nations, New York website. Overseas, inquiries may be made at the nearest Ugandan embassy or consulate.

HIV/AIDS restrictions: 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 the Department of State website. For further information about customs regulations, please read our Customs Information page.

THREATS TO SAFETY AND SECURITY: Potential for terrorist activity from extremist organizations such as al-Shabaab remains high and U.S. citizens are advised to avoid high-density public gatherings. The July 11, 2010 bombings of the rugby club and an Ethiopian restaurant in Kampala resulted in the deaths of 76 people, including one U.S. citizen, with six other U.S. citizens among the injured. More recently, terrorists in Nairobi attacked a bus bound for Kampala on December 20, 2010. U.S. citizens residing in or planning to visit Uganda should also be aware of threats to their safety posed by insurgent groups operating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) 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 and Eastern Uganda:

After years of conflict, relative stability returned to northern Uganda in 2006 when the Lord’s Resistance Army
(LRA) rebel group fled to neighboring DRC. The vast majority of people internally displaced by the LRA in northern Uganda have since returned home, and the Ugandan Government continues to expand and improve the capacity of the civilian police force in northern Uganda by deploying additional personnel and concentrating resources in further recovery and re-development activities throughout the north. The Governments of Uganda, the DRC, and southern Sudan initiated joint military operations against LRA bases in the DRC in December 2008, after LRA leader Joseph Kony refused to sign a peace agreement. These military operations are ongoing, as are LRA attacks on civilian populations in the DRC, Central African Republic, and southern Sudan.

Like the rest of Uganda, the North suffers from a general lack of infrastructure.

Services such as emergency medical care are inadequate, and U.S. citizens are strongly advised to restrict travel to primary roads and daylight hours only due to hazardous driving conditions, the potential for banditry, and poor roadways.

Cattle rustling, armed banditry, and attacks on vehicles are very common in the Karamoja region of northeastern Uganda, and the Uganda People's Defense Force UPDF continues to implement a program to disarm Karamojong warriors. Past incidents 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. In February 2010, unknown assailants attacked an NGO convoy near Nakapiripirit. Three people were killed and two others were injured. U.S. citizens are advised to avoid travel to the Karamoja region given the frequent insecurity. For U.S. Embassy personnel, any travel to Karamoja (excluding charter flights to Kidepo National Park) 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 can 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 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, in 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, 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:
As many as 40 people were killed during violent riots in Kampala from September 10-12, 2009. Several hundred more were injured as Ugandan security services used live bullets and tear gas to bring the riots under control.

Demonstrations in Kampala and other Ugandan cities occur from time to time in response to world events or local developments. These demonstrations frequently occur with little warning and can become confrontational or 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.

Stay up to date by bookmarking our Bureau of Consular Affairs website, which contains the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts as well as the Worldwide Caution. Follow us on Twitter and the Bureau of Consular Affairs page on Facebook as well.

You can also call 1-888-407-4747 toll-free within the United States 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).

Take some time before you travel to improve your personal security—things are not the same everywhere as they are in the United States. Here are some useful tips for 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 carjacking 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. They 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 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, 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.
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 where they were 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.

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 contact the Embassy's Political - Economic Section 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.

Additional information about the most common types of financial fraud can also be found within the State Department Financial Scams Brochure.

Don’t buy counterfeit and pirated goods, even if they are widely available. Not only are the bootlegs illegal in the United States, if you purchase them you may also be breaking local law.

**VICTIMS OF CRIME:** If you or someone you know becomes 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). If your passport is stolen we can help you replace it. For violent crimes such as assault and rape, we can help you find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends, and help them send you money if you need it. 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 you need. Please visit the U.S. Embassy’s Assistance for Crime Victims webpage for more information.

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 you are traveling in Uganda, you are subject to its laws even if you are a U.S. citizen. Foreign laws and legal systems can be vastly different than our own. Persons violating Ugandan laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested, or imprisoned. In Uganda, you may be taken in for questioning if you don’t have your passport, or a copy of it, together with your Ugandan visa. Penalties for possessing, using, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Uganda are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. 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. In Uganda, driving under the influence could land you immediately in jail. There are also some things that might be legal in Uganda, but still illegal in the United States, and you can be prosecuted under U.S. law if you buy pirated goods. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime **prosecutable in the United States**. If you break local laws in Uganda, your U.S. passport won’t help you avoid arrest or prosecution. It’s very important to know what’s legal and what’s not where you are going.

Uganda does not have a bilateral agreement with the United States requiring mandatory notification to the U.S. Embassy in the event of the arrest of a U.S. citizen. Notification is only required if the arrested U.S. citizen requests it.

Based on the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, bilateral agreements with certain countries, and customary international law, if you are arrested in Uganda, you have the option to request that the police, prison officials, or other authorities alert the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate of your arrest, and to have communications from you forwarded to the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.

**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 before 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.

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**.

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 the U.S. 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 and other questionable practices.

The U.S. Embassy also 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 via telephone at 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, so 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.
Uganda is a relatively conservative society. Overt public displays of affection between persons of the opposite gender will likely garner serious disapproval, particularly in rural areas. Public displays of affection between persons of the same gender risk serious disapproval, and possibly violence. In 2010, at least four men featured on a list of 100 homosexuals with their names and photographs under the headline “hang them” in a Ugandan newspaper were, while others have gone into hiding. Travelers should be aware of these cultural norms and exercise discretion to greatly reduce the chance of encountering difficulties during their stay in Uganda.

**Accessibility:** While in Uganda, individuals with disabilities may find accessibility and accommodation very different from what you find in the United States. Although the law prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities in employment, education, access to health care, and the provision of other state services, the government does not enforce the law effectively. The Ugandan Human Rights Commission continues to receive complaints of discrimination in access to transportation, communication, and public buildings from persons with disabilities.

No statutory requirement exists mandating that buildings be accessible to persons with disabilities. Accessibility to public transportation, foot paths and road crossings, free or reduced fares, taxis, communication, lodging, medical facilities, restaurants, cafes, bars, and other tourist spots is similarly non-existent.

**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 also 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 website.

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.

In December 2010, as many as seven districts in northern Uganda reported occurrences of yellow fever - including two possible cases from southern Sudan. Almost all of the reported severe cases (characterized by fever, vomiting, and bleeding) continue to be concentrated in three districts, namely Abim (specifically Morulem sub-county), Agago (Omia P’Chua, Adilang and Paimoi sub-counties), and Kitgum (Orum, Namokora, and Kitgum Town Council).

In light of these findings, the U.S. Mission in Kampala recommends that U.S. citizens residing and traveling in Uganda avoid travel to these areas of northern Uganda unless they have been vaccinated against Yellow Fever within the past 10 years. If vaccinated recently, do not travel to northern Uganda for at least 10 days after receiving the vaccination. *(Yellow Fever vaccinations do not take effect for 10 days.)* U.S. government officials who have not been vaccinated for Yellow Fever are not permitted to travel to the affected areas.

You can find good information on vaccinations and other health precautions on the [CDC website](#). For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad, consult the [World Health Organization (WHO) website](#). The WHO website also contains additional health information for travelers, including [detailed country-specific health information](#).
Tuberculosis is an increasingly serious health concern in Uganda. For further information, please consult the CDC's information on TB.

Uganda has experienced recent outbreaks of Marburg Hemorrhagic Fever, Ebola Hemorrhagic Fever, Pneumonic Plague, Meningitis, Yellow Fever and other types of infectious diseases.

**MEDICAL INSURANCE:** You can’t assume your insurance will go with you when you travel. It’s very important to find out BEFORE you leave whether or not your medical insurance will cover you overseas. You need to ask your insurance company two questions:

--Does my policy apply when I’m out of the United States?

--Will it cover emergencies, like a trip to a foreign hospital or a medical evacuation?

In many places, doctors and hospitals still expect payment in cash at the time of service. Your regular U.S. health insurance may not cover doctors’ and hospital visits in other countries. If your policy doesn’t go with you when you travel, it’s a very good idea to take out another one for your trip. For more information, please see our medical insurance overseas page.

**TRAFFIC SAFETY AND ROAD CONDITIONS:** While in Uganda, you may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States.

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. Click here for information on Government of Uganda agencies.

**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 ICAO international 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.

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This replaces the Country Specific Information for Uganda dated March 16, 2010, to update sections on Special Circumstances and Medical Facilities and Health Information.