



BEFORE YOU GO

**ACTION SITARU
PRE-DEPARTURE
HANDBOOK
2016**

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ESSENTIALS TO CONSIDER BEFORE TRAVEL

PASSPORT

You need an up to date passport. Check it NOW. And check you know where it is. Sounds obvious right? Judging from past volunteer experiences, it is not that simple.

You need 12 months + on your passport from your intended date of entry.

VISAS

You can either get your visa in advance or buy your visa at the airport on arrival in Uganda. Either way, make sure you apply for a HOLIDAY visa (and then put purpose of entry as holiday on your landing card). A volunteer visa is something very different which you can't get from the UK or at the airport. Your contact address is PO Box 660, Mbale. Your physical address is Bubulo, Manafwa. Your contact number is +256 772 977 226

If applying in advance, you can download an application form at:

UK passport holders - <http://www.ugandahighcommission.co.uk/ConsularInformation/VisaInfo.aspx>

US passport holders - <http://www.ugandaembassy.com/page/visa-requirements>.

It costs £70/\$100 for a 3 month single entry tourist visa.

Visas are valid for 3 months from your date of entry into Uganda. If you buy your visa in advance, the date that is stamped in your passport is the date by which you need to have entered Uganda, not left. The visa is single entry so if you leave Uganda and need to re-enter it, they'll charge you for a new one.

You can also get an East African visa which is also \$100 and worthwhile getting if you plan to travel to Rwanda and Tanzania.

The information on the website of the Ugandan High Commission in London is out of date. This is the correct up to date information.

INSURANCE

Insurance is another absolutely crucial thing to get before travel. Make sure it provides adequate cover for everywhere you want to go and everything you want to do i.e. volunteering, White Water Rafting (including Grade 5 Rapids – mention this to them – don't expect them to ask you), Safari, Bungee Jumping, Quad Biking... Shop around as prices vary, but you could be looking at something between £60-90/\$85-125. If you are considering any of the above activities, get yourself insured, even if you are not 100% sure, as it is so much easier to do it from home than from Uganda.

FLIGHTS

The only international airport in Uganda is Entebbe. Again, it's worth shopping around a bit for the best deal for these. Several airlines will offer return flights from other airports so if you want to travel, you could arrange to fly into Entebbe and then out of Nairobi (Kenya), Dar es Salaam or Zanzibar (Tanzania). You need to ensure you arrive in Uganda by the date and time given by LBA. You may be able to get a group discount if you liaise with a travel agency/airline. Airlines that fly into Entebbe are: Emirates, Ethiopian Airlines, Etihad, Qatar, Kenya Airways, Air Egypt, Air France, KLM, Turkish Airlines and Brussels Airlines.

FOREIGN OFFICE ADVICE

LBA keeps up to date with the Foreign Office travel advice and will advise you if there are any announcements that regard your movements whilst in Uganda on project. However, it is CRUCIAL that you check the Foreign Office Website (<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/uganda>) (or for US volunteers, the Travel State/STEP website (<http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/country/uganda.html>) about where is safe to travel after the project. There are areas of Uganda that the FCO recommend you don't visit (these are not project areas, and LBA will not take you to areas where it is not recommended to travel). You must check Foreign Office advice on this before you go and while you're away. You can also ask LBA for updated travel/security advice about Uganda and surrounding countries.

DBS DISCLOSURES

As part of LBA's Child Safeguarding Policies ALL volunteers must have a recent (maximum 2 years) DBS Enhanced Disclosure. These can take 6-8 weeks to come back once you have applied for them, so it is important to do them early. LBA needs them by 1st May, which means you should be applying for them at the beginning of March at the latest. Without a DBS Disclosure, you will not be able to join the training and without training, you will not be able to go to placement. Your university should be able to support you in your application - if you have any questions at all contact your project parent, someone from your society at university or LBA.

HEALTH

Prior to arriving in Uganda, it is essential that each volunteer sees a medical practitioner to get advice about travelling to Uganda. You can do some general research online and two suitable sites to start the research include <http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/home.aspx> and <http://www.masta-travel-health.com/> but your medical practitioner will be able to personalise that information to you. It is important to book an appointment as early as possible so you have time to fit in everything before you fly.

Having obtained advice, it is worth shopping around for the various vaccinations and anti-malarials as they can greatly vary in price from one surgery/travel clinic/pharmacy to another.

When in Uganda, hygiene is crucial. You are likely to have at least the odd minor stomach upset while you're there. Without a doubt, take antibacterial hand gel as it proves very useful when clean water is not immediately available to wash your hands. Most of the illnesses volunteers face on placement are as a result of poor hygiene, which can easily be controlled and prevented.

Dehydration is a common cause of volunteers becoming ill and you need to make sure you drink plenty of (boiled/purified) water throughout the day. You need to be aware of the strength of the sun as you are near the equator and working at altitude, apply sunscreen regularly/wear a hat, and stay out of the sun in the middle of the day. Long sleeved, light clothing, caps/hats, collars etc can make a great difference in protecting yourself from the hot sun especially if you have been burnt already and need extra protection.

Malaria, which is spread through mosquitoes, is present throughout all areas in Uganda. It is treatable although the earlier it is caught, the less severe it usually is. It is very preventable. Wear long-sleeved/legged clothing in the evening, and use a tropical insect repellent (50% DEET). Also it is crucial that you sleep under a treated mosquito net and take your malaria prophylaxis as prescribed. LBA can organise for you to buy a net in Uganda, ready for your arrival. Nets bought in Uganda are generally much cheaper and a better shape than nets bought in the UK/US.

HIV is transferred through crossing of bodily fluids such as blood, semen and vaginal fluids. It is mostly referred to as a sexually transmitted disease but can also be passed on through sharing needles and blood transfusion/contact. You cannot tell from looking at someone that they are HIV positive, and volunteers are recommended to take great care if they are to involve themselves in sexual relations with anyone during the time they are in Uganda*. However much you trust someone, whatever they say to you, whatever they look like, whatever race they are, you do not know their (sexual) history. Whilst condoms are a preventative method, abstinence is the only 100% safe option. If you are involved in an accident and need a transfusion, all donated blood used in Ugandan hospitals is screened for HIV and Hepatitis B amongst other diseases. In nearly all circumstances, clean needles will be used, but you may want to carry your own in cases of emergency where clean/unused needles are not available. The clinic we advise volunteers to use in Mbale will always provide you with a sealed new needle, if a needle is needed.

* This will also be covered in Volunteer's Code of Conduct when you arrive in Uganda

ADVICE FROM PREVIOUS VOLUNTEERS

In no particular order... when asked what they would recommend future volunteers do before their trip to Uganda, this is what they said...

- **Read the LBA pre-departure booklets;**
- Make sure you have all of the kit list;
- Read up on current affairs, history, politics & religion in Uganda so you know what to expect
- Get fit - go to the gym/get in some physical exercise; practise lifting heavy things (a typical jerrycan is 20 kgs);
- **Read the LBA Action Sitaru 2016 Facebook Page and ask questions;**
- Practise hand washing clothes;
- Get enough money ahead of time - decide what you want to do while you're in Uganda and make sure you have money to cover all of it;
- Try on skirts to see if see-through or if slits are too long;
- Bond with your team. Even if you think you are different from them, you will be living, working, cooking etc with them when in Uganda;
- Know where you're going - doing your research - share this amongst your group;
- Do a shopping list so you know what you need to get [check the LBA kit list];
- Learn/practise cooking with basic ingredients/ a few ingredients;
- Get cash for the first few days. Use pounds instead of dollars, you lose less [in the exchange rate];
- Make sure your money notes are more recent than 2006 and have no tears or marks on - banks are strict.
- Sit down with your team and divide up everything you need so you don't replicate unnecessarily and bring surplus.
- Print photos out of home and friends and family.
- Learn Lugisu.
- Get excited!