



MONEY

ACTION SITARU

PRE-DEPARTURE HANDBOOK

2016

hello@littlebigafrica.org

 **Little Big Africa**

www.littlebigafrica.org

 **littlebigafrica**

UK registered Charity no. 1138994

Money, Money, Money

The currency in Uganda is shillings. The following advice is for during your time in Uganda. Ugandan shillings are not allowed to be taken out the country (officially!) so you will not be able to obtain any local currency in advance. There are two main ways to bring your money:

DEBIT/CREDIT CARD

A debit/credit card is the most convenient and safest way to bring your money. Several Banks will allow you to withdraw money from your home bank account through a VISA card at 24 hour ATMs, which are available in most towns in Uganda, including Mbale. This can be done through either a credit or debit card. There is also one bank that will accept Mastercard though you cannot be guaranteed to find this bank in all towns (there is one in Mbale). ATMs will only give you Ugandan shillings and are unable to give you any other currency.

Costs for withdrawing REALLY vary with different UK/US banks/card providers. It is recommended that you check with your bank to confirm how much commission they charge (some banks are free, some charge 20%+). Remember though, your card (whether it is debit or credit) must have a VISA sign (not VISA Electron) or Mastercard in order to work. Otherwise debit/credit cards are very rarely accepted (unless you are planning on splashing out hundreds of dollars to stay in a posh hotel in Kampala!) and where they are accepted, they incur a minimum 3% surcharge (sometimes up to 10%). You can pay for your rafting (not safari) by card with a 3% surcharge.

It is recommended phoning your card provider to inform them that you are away so they don't put a stop to your card when they see large sums of money being withdrawn in Uganda. Also if you're prone to losing your bank cards, change your bank account address to your parents address so if you get a new card sent out it will go to someone who can forward it and not your uni house.

CASH

In Mbale, as with all large towns in Uganda, there are banks where you can exchange cash. If you choose to bring cash, LBA recommends bringing GB Pounds or US Dollars for exchanging in Uganda as they are as readily accepted as each other. But if you have GB Pounds already, it is not worth converting your pounds to dollars to again convert to shillings as you will just lose money in two exchange rates.

Everywhere in Uganda, including banks, are very fussy about the condition of notes. We recommend you ensure any money you bring for exchanging (whether pounds or dollars) is of a minimum denomination of at least 20 i.e. nothing smaller than £20 or \$20 as smaller notes can be difficult to change and also attract a lower exchange rate. They should have no tears and no marks or writing on them. Dollars must be more recent than 2006. Although it is still legal tender, no where in Uganda will accept dollars from earlier than 2006. Whatever your bank tells you, insist on newer & clean/untorn notes else you will have problems when in Uganda. If someone gives you some dollars as a present, check them & exchange them at a bank before you come if necessary. Also, Scottish pounds are not accepted anywhere in Mbale and accept a much lower exchange rate at forex bureaus in Kampala.

Smaller dollars can be useful for travelling, for example for tipping when on safari, and you generally get a better exchange rate paying for tourist activities which are usually priced in dollars, such as safari & rafting. Dollars are also more useful for travelling in Tanzania and Kenya. If you are crossing borders, Dollars can also be useful for buying visas (though you can also use Pounds and local currency).

TRAVELLERS' CHEQUES

It is NOT possible to change travellers cheques in Mbale and you will not get a chance to change any travellers cheques before going to Mbale so you will not be able to cash travellers cheques during the project, or before rafting.

The Million \$ Question: How Much Money Should I Bring?

All of your project costs are included in the budget (your fundraising target) so the amount of money you need will depend largely on how extravagant you are and how much travelling you plan to do after the programme. During placement you are given a small allowance which should cover a simple village lifestyle. Many volunteer groups are able to live off this allowance. It is only what we call luxury items as well as medical treatment (if you need it) that you will need your own personal money for. This includes but is not limited to:

- * Meals & accommodation on arrival in Entebbe
- * Sim cards & airtime
- * Sodas & snacks on placement
- * Alcohol (when off placement, it's not possible to drink alcohol on placement)
- * 3 day Mid placement break (you may choose to stay on placement but if you choose to go to Mbale or Sipi Falls you will need personal spending money)
- * Luxury food items (read chocolate!)
- * Souvenirs & Gifts for family and friends
- * Postcards and stamps
- * Clothes (many people have traditional outfits made)
- * Mosquito nets (much cheaper and more suitable in Uganda; LBA can ensure you have one on arrival)
- * LBA Tshirts
- * Abseiling at Sipi Falls
- * Rafting
- * Safari
- * Meals & drinks after debrief has finished until you fly home
- * Post placement travel including getting yourself to the airport
- * Medical Bills
- * Swimming

Last year's volunteers spent approximately £20-£30 extra per group for things they needed at the beginning of placement that would last them the whole time (i.e. black pepper, herbs etc) and volunteers spent between £15 - £20 each on personal items during training (such as beers, internet,

shopping). In total volunteers spent between £20 and £200 each throughout the whole time on placement, which for some included a two night stay in Sipi Falls, and/or a night in a more upmarket hotel in Mbale and/or regular international phone calls.

This is a summary of how much different volunteers spent during placement (n.b. this is from arriving in Uganda up until debrief when the information is collected and doesn't include rafting, safari or any travelling post-project). Some of the answers seem to be conflicting but the idea is to give you a range of what different volunteers said they spent.

On Placement

- "It is possible to live within the budget but if you want anything comfort food related then expect things that are cheap in the UK (e.g. chocolate) to be expensive."
- "Before mid-placement we had our food money (allowance) left in our kitty but we spent it quickly after."
- "In the village we spent very little money, our food budget covered more than all our expenses"
- "We each put in £20 extra into the communal money (to top up our allowances) which was perhaps more than we needed to. We used it to buy sodas, snacks, and extra kitchen utensils."
- "On placement £7 each"
- "On placement we spent between £5 and £15 each on snacks, sodas & transport to visit other volunteers or to go to further away markets".
- "We spent an extra £25 per person on sodas, snacks and transport whilst on placement"
- "In the village we spent around £15 each which included sodas and snacks."
- "We spent £1 per day per person on chapati and soda because we chose not to cook lunch."

Phone Credit

- "Group members spent between £5 and £15 on phone credit during placement"
- "Most of us also spent about £25 on phone credit during placement."
- "We spent £6-12 each on luxury food items at a supermarket in Mbale"

Mid-Placement

- "£92 on a weekend away at Sipi/Mbale"
- "In Mbale and Sipi, money we spent was on food, accommodation and transport"
- "£27 for weekend in Sipi"

In Total

- "As a group we spent between £100-250 during placement, including mid-placement and a second weekend in Mbale"
- "About £114 for everything - night out in Mbale, trip to Sipi Falls, sodas, meals, phone credit, clothes, transport"
- "Whilst in village, we used between £5-15 on snacks, sodas, sweets, tailoring (getting clothes made) and transport to other placements. At mid-placement we spent about £150 each on food, alcohol, accommodation, transport, touring the water falls and abseiling."
- "£150-200 (including placement and mid-placement break, but not including rafting and safari)"
- "£200-300 (excluding safari & rafting). Mid-placement break is expensive because the food is so good so we splashed out. We also used a lot in airtime for calling home."
-
- "£300-£400 including all trips (which included: Sipi Falls at Mid-placement (including Abseiling), Safari, and Rafting. Of that we spent £50-100 pounds on placement"
- "Including mid-placement and debrief, roughly £400 (including abseiling, bungee, rafting, safari, rhino, food when out of allowance/on breaks). It depends how well your group budgets if you need to use personal money for food."

Breakdown of Costs

This is a breakdown of approximate prices of some of the things above which volunteers spent their money on (nb. the exchange rate can fluctuate quite a lot so these prices can & probably will change):

Item	Cost	Details
Visa at airport (if not bought in advance)	£70/\$100	
Accommodation in Entebbe	£4	This is at Entebbe backpackers. You need to book this early as it quickly gets fully booked in the summer. Other more expensive accommodation is available.
Food & drinks on arrival day	£4 a meal	
Transport to Mbale	Covered	
Food & drinking water during training	Covered	
Accommodation during training	Covered	
Material & tailoring for clothes	Anything from £4 upwards for material and £2.50 up for tailoring	
Sim card & Airtime	£2.50-£25	
Sodas, snacks & (limited) beers during training	£5-20	Sodas/bottled water cost £0.25-0.50 each and beers cost £0.75-£1.25 each depending where you are buying them.
LBA Tshirts	£4 each	
Postcard & stamp to UK	£1.03	Each postcard & stamp to UK
Motorcycle helmet	£15	LBA recommends volunteers do not ride motorbike taxis but if you choose to we strongly recommend you buy & wear a helmet.
Mosquito net	£5	
Welly Boots	£7	
Local mobile phone handset	£15-20	Only if you don't have a suitable handset to bring with you.
Transport to village	Covered	
Accommodation in village	Covered	

Item	Cost	Details
Food & charcoal in village	Covered by allowance	
Allowance top up for snacks, luxuries & extra transport to visit other volunteers	£5-15 or top end £50	It's hard to spend more than £50 in the village!
Transport to & from mid-placement	Covered	On public transport. If you choose to charter a vehicle, you need to pay extra.
<p>Midplacement: Last year all volunteers went to Sipi for a mid-placement break. You could choose to return to placement to save money instead: that would be your cheapest option. Based on previous estimates, for a weekend in Sipi, including hiking to the Waterfalls, Western meals and drinks, you are looking at approximately £35-£110. This is broken down below (the mid-placement costs below are NOT extra to this figure, just giving you a break down)</p>		
Day/night out in Mbale	£7.50 accommodation; £10 Western lunch; £10 Western dinner + drinks (£5-£15)	This is high end on food & drinks.
Swimming	£2.50	Only available during mid-placement
Transport to Sipi Falls	£2.50	Public transport
Mid placement trip to Sipi Falls	£13 full board per night x 2 nights	
Extra meals at mid-placement	£10 each one	Some people ate several extra meals!! It is possible to get Ugandan (non-Western food) for £1 upwards.
Abseiling at Sipi Falls	\$50	Optional
Transport to debrief	Covered	
Dinner at the end of project	£10	This is an optional group dinner out.
Souvenirs	From 25p upwards	Depending on what you're buying and for how many people.
Rafting	\$124 / 91	Including transport from Mbale & 1 night accommodation
Accommodation in Jinja	\$11	Per night. That is the cheapest option though you can always find more expensive options.

Item	Cost	Details
Meals & Drinks in Jinja/ Kampala	£4-10 per meal; £1.25 per beer; £0.50 per soda	It is possible to get Ugandan (non-Western food) for £1 upwards.
Safari	\$355/£260	Payable in USD or GBP or UGS. (Paid at training). Price confirmed if deposit paid by 31st March 2015.
Meals & drinks on safari (water included in safari price)	£5 per meal; £1.25 per beer; £0.50 per soda	3 days/2 nights