



COUNTRY
OVERVIEW

& PACKING
GUIDELINES

Uganda: Wildlife Conservation and Political Ecology
Fall 2021

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COUNTRY OVERVIEW

GENERAL INFORMATION

Uganda is located in East Africa with a total area of 241,548 Km². It is well endowed with natural resources, such as rivers, lakes, mountains, and waterfalls and wildlife. It lies across the equator and two-thirds of the country is plateau. Uganda borders Sudan in the north, Kenya in the east, Tanzania and Rwanda in the south, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in the west.

English and Swahili are the country's official languages but the population, which is made up of approximately eighty-six ethnic groups, speaks four different languages, with many dialects that are unique to the ethnic groups. Uganda's main economic sectors are agriculture and tourism but may soon include oil mining. The government is headed by President Museveni who has ruled Uganda for thirty-two years. The legislature is democratically elected and serves for five years. Currently, Uganda's ninth parliament has three hundred and sixty-five members, headed by the first female speaker of parliament. Ugandans are very friendly, hospitable and hardworking. They will warmly welcome you to their country and into their homes.

CLIMATE AND GEOGRAPHY

Uganda lies astride the equator but due to inland elevations and winds coming off of Lake Victoria, the weather is surprisingly temperate and similar to that of California. The main rainy season is during April and May with a second and lesser one in October and November. The dry season is typically December to February and June to August.

Kampala: AVERAGE HIGH/LOW TEMPERATURES (°F)				
JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY
80/62	81/63	81/64	79/64	79/64
SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	
79/63	79/61	79/61	79/61	

Kampala is about 3,500 feet above sea level. Because of its elevation, the weather occasionally gets chilly at night. The average Kampala maximum and minimum temperatures are listed below in in Fahrenheit: The two main rainy seasons are February to April and November to January.



DIET

SIT Study Abroad provides experiential learning opportunities where students become embedded in their host community. As such, we strive to accommodate serious food allergies where possible but simply cannot ensure that all dietary restrictions or non-medically mandated diets can be accommodated. Again, for vegetarians many vegetarian dishes are easily available in Ugandan restaurants or from food vendors. In case you have food allergies or any type of dietary restriction or a vegetarian, it is important that you inform the AD/AC in advance.

Students are encouraged to participate in the local food culture as a central aspect of daily life and part of experiential learning. By trying to replicate your diet at home you may miss out on an important part of your host culture. Due to the unique living and learning community central to all SIT programs, we cannot separate food and eating communally (including eating with host groups from the local communities) from the program experience. Please consider local diet seriously when selecting your program of choice. Your admissions counselor is a great resource in better understanding the local diet.



SAFETY, SECURITY, AND HEALTH

Maintaining good health is critical to having a successful semester. To help you do that, we have

provided [Health Guidelines and Requirements](#) for your program.

It is very important that you read the Health Guidelines and Requirements document as early as possible and examine it with your medical provider. The guidelines include recommended immunizations; a suggested calendar for immunizations and other prophylaxes; and valuable information on how to avoid exposure to common carriers of disease.

SIT will require COVID-19 vaccination for all U.S. students. Recognizing that not all international students will have access to vaccines by Fall 2021, SIT asks that international students who wish to travel in and who do not have access to a vaccine apply for an accommodation by emailing your admissions counselor.

The Health Guidelines and Requirements will also provide recommendations related to preventing the contraction and spread of COVID-19. Students will be provided with COVID-19 related information and requirements prior to your travel in order to provide you with the most up-to-date information. General information about SIT's response to COVID-19 can be found on our webpage here: <https://studyabroad.sit.edu/health-safety-and-well-being/risk-management/sit-health-and-safety-update-in-response-to-covid-19/>

Students are thoroughly briefed on safety considerations during in-country orientation and are updated throughout the semester if and when circumstances change. For information regarding safety and security, emergency communications, SIT policies, accident and illness insurance, and general program tips, please read the [Safety, Security, and Health](#) document and [Student Handbook](#).

ACCOMMODATIONS

When you arrive in Uganda, you will initially stay at a modest accommodation Entebbe city in the central Uganda, which is located 6 km from the Entebbe International Airport. Thereafter, you will move to Kampala city. During the program, there are excursions to eastern and western Uganda. During these excursions, the program will also stay at modest hotels, guest houses, hostels and camping using own tents, depending on the situation on site. On the other hand, during Independent Study Project

living arrangements depend entirely on where one is doing his or her project. In the past students have resided at rented a shared apartment or stayed at a hotel or guest house. Whichever option you choose, the AD will approve that it is a safe and secure place. There are places that previous students have been recommended by previous students, and these will be shared with you during the program to allow you time to check them out.

TRANSPORTATION

During the program you will use public transport that is popularly referred to as “taxis” or “mini buses” during your commute from home to the Resource Center. The rides are usually long because of traffic jams so you are advised to leave home early to be on time for program activities. While in Kampala, the main transport hubs are the “Old Taxi Park” and the “New Taxi Park” however it isn’t unusual to get taxis along the routes that stop to pick up passengers. Paying for public transport here entirely depends on the taxi you board, some pay before you get on the taxi, but the usual practice is to pay during the ride.

In the event that you need information about transport, please ask program staff because Uganda’s transport system does not have a website or an information platform where such information can be obtained readily. Travel on the taxi is not timed, so you have to wait until the taxi is full for you to start your journey. A typical journey from the home base to the Resource Centre could take between 30 minutes to an hour. After a brief introduction to the taxi system by staff, you will be expected to use the taxis on your own. You will be responsible for your own travel and safety of your belonging from the home base to the venues where the classes will be held. Group travel during excursions is organized by the program.

COMMUNICATION

While you may want to be in regular communication with friends and family from home during the term abroad, please bear in mind that different time zones, unreliable phone lines, and changing program activities can complicate communication.

It’s important to be clear with family and friends about your availability during the term. Many students recommend making an appointment to call home or

to receive a call. You should also consider the impact of constant communication with friends and family at home on your cultural immersion.

PHONES AND E-MAIL

As part of SIT’s commitment to student safety and security, all students are required to have a working smart phone capable of making and receiving both local and international calls throughout the duration of the program. For that purpose students are required to either (a) bring an open, unlocked smart phone from the U.S. to the program that is able to accept a local SIM card, and is compatible with and usable at the program location, (b) work with the Academic coordinator within the first week upon arrival in country to purchase a smart phone locally, (c) bring a dual SIM smart phone, or (d) bring a smart phone with an international plan. During orientation, with assistance from SIT Study Abroad staff, students will learn how to use their cellphone, how to purchase and use an appropriate local SIM card, and how to acquire minutes for calls and texting. SIT Study Abroad requires that each student have a local number for communication with the program staff.

While we recognize that alternative communication methods can be free or cheaper than cell service i.e. Facetime, Skype, WhatsApp, etc. those programs alone do not satisfy our need for regular communication with the local program staff and partners, nor do they meet our emergency communication needs. Therefore, local cellular capacity on each student’s phone is required for the duration of the program. Students are required to maintain a minimum amount of phone credits at all times for emergency calls. Full compliance with this policy is expected.

Uganda has a well-developed public and privatized telephone system that has seven telephone outputs. Uganda Telecom Ltd, Mango, Airtel, Mobile Telecommunication Network (MTN), Smile, and Orange. These different companies are highly competitive, therefore if purchasing a phone, it is recommended that you choose one that is cheap but that also covers a wide range of the country. On each of these networks you will be able to call the US at different rates, but it is strongly recommended that families and friends call you unless it is a personal emergency. Remember, while making your calls, there will be significant time differences between

Uganda and your home. Please keep this in mind before calling friends and family in another time zone.

SIT provides students with a portable WIFI hotspot and monthly stipend for data at the program base.

MAILINGS

Unlike receiving a package here in the US, receiving a package at your program site is usually **expensive** and **problematic**. Customs agents must inspect all packages and you, as the recipient, are responsible for duty and storage fees. In addition, there are cases of items being lost in the mail or taking so long to reach the recipient that the recipient is nearly back in the US by the time the items are received. For these reasons, sending packages should be done only for emergency situations. Additionally, sending valuables is highly discouraged.

For this program, **DHL and FedEx services are available in country**. Despite cheaper prices, reliance on the US Postal Service is not advised due to delays and unreliability. When given the option, it's always a good idea to send packages certified and with a tracking number that allows the sender to track the package.

Posted letters and packages should be sent to the following address:

Student Name
SIT/World Learning
Resource Center
P.O. Box 23431
Plot 107, Buganda Road
Wandegeya, Kampala,
Uganda

MONEY

In addition to tuition, SIT Study Abroad program fees cover room and board throughout the program. When room and/or board are not taken with the group, students will be given a stipend to cover related expenses. SIT will cover daily commuting costs, if any, and excursions that are part of the normal program itinerary. During the ISP students will receive a stipend for basic room and board only, based on the cost of living at the program base. **Any domestic travel, interpretation services, or supplies necessary for the ISP are the students' responsibility**. Please plan accordingly.

Uganda's local currency is "*Shillings*" and will be the main medium of transaction. It is only in big hotels that other currencies such as US dollars will be accepted. The Ugandan shillings come in coins of 50, 100, 200, and 500 and paper money in 1000, 2000, 5000, 10000, 20000, and 50,000 denominations. It is important that you familiarize yourself with this local currency as there are different notes of the same value that come in different colors. The rate of exchange will vary greatly given the international money market, so keep up to date with these rates before you change your money.

Cash (particularly in US\$50 and US\$100 denominations) is easier to exchange and gets a better rate, but it cannot be replaced if lost or stolen. Smaller cash denominations fetch lower rates than the larger bills. Bills issued before 2006 may not be accepted in many places. Traveler's checks are no longer accepted.

A Visa or MasterCard debit card is usable at some banks, however, the charges for each withdrawal are high. In the event that a Visa card is lost, you will be required to organize a temporary transfer of money to you via Western Union or Money Gram as you wait for the replacement of the card.

Students who intend to stay in Uganda after the program may open a bank account, but this must be a bank recommended by their bank in the US. We provide basic secure places to keep money.

If using a debit and/or credit card, you should contact your bank and/or credit card companies regarding your travel plans. If you don't inform these companies that you will be away, they will often assume the card has been lost or stolen and will put an immediate hold on the card. You should also check on costs of withdrawal, as these costs vary and can sometimes be very expensive. Renewing and receiving reissued credit and debit cards while on the program will be an expensive and highly inconvenient process. Before you leave for your program, please check the expiration dates on your cards to ensure that they will not expire while you are abroad. It is also very important that you make photocopies of all your debit/credit card information and leave them with someone you trust in case your card(s) is/are lost or stolen.

Following are suggestions for spending money during the program, including estimates for

textbooks, ISP related expenses, medical expenses, personal spending, and gifts. Figures are based on recent student evaluations, though individual spending habits vary widely, and **these costs are averages**.

To determine where you might fall in this range, please examine your spending habits during a typical semester at your home school and consider any exceptional expenditures you may have on the program, including travel costs for your planned ISP or a specific personal expense. Please be aware that past students have found that usage of internet and WIFI services beyond the basics provided by SIT for your academic use can drive up personal spending costs significantly.

Check current exchange rates: <http://www.oanda.com/currency/converter/>

Personal spending (from past student suggestions):	\$200
Books, printing, supplies:	\$50
Bottled water:	\$50
Up-front medical costs:	\$100
Potential ISP/internship travel expenses:	\$150
Visa:	\$30
COVID-19 Entry Test(s) (may be required for entry; subject to	\$100- 250
Estimated total:	\$930- 1500

Please budget approximately:



VISITORS AND FREE TIME

SIT strongly discourages and will not provide support for any visitors to students during the term, due to the rigorous nature of the program and the disruption that such visits cause in program flow and group dynamics. Students should be sure that relatives and friends are aware of this policy and that visits are scheduled for dates after the formal conclusion of the program. Students will not be excused from program components to attend to visitors. See the Attendance and Participation section of the [Student Handbook](#).

While considering where to conduct your practicum, keep in mind that you will not be allowed to travel to unsecure areas, such as the Karamoja region and the western border areas with Congo and other areas that the program may designate as unsafe. You will work together with your Academic Director to find a suitable and secure location. Students are required to inform the AD of any changes in their practicum schedule such as changes in the itinerary or visiting

different parts of Uganda during their free time. Travel outside of Uganda is prohibited.

During the program, students follow an intense schedule of classes and field-based learning assignments, even during the ISP. Free time for pursuing an independent interest or hobby during the program will be limited. Your admissions counselor can advise you about particular interests you may have. For example, if you must keep in shape for your next athletic season, or if you play a musical instrument and want to know whether to bring it, we can help you to understand your schedule and any concerns or limitations that may exist. Please note that you will not have a long break during the program, such as Thanksgiving or Spring Break.

Because of the COVID-19 Global Pandemic, SIT has suspended independent travel for all Fall 2021 Programs. SIT defines “independent travel” as travel that is independently organized by a student(s) and is unrelated to program activities; and involves an overnight stay.

PACKING GUIDELINES

LUGGAGE

Please pack lightly and include only necessary items. You should be able to carry all your luggage significant distances on your own. Try to minimize both the number of bags and weight of your bag(s) since you will likely be acquiring more belongings while abroad.

Usually only one carry-on is permitted on the plane: we recommend a small daypack, which will also be useful for short excursions when on the program. In addition, it's recommended that students bring a medium-sized camping backpack and another medium-sized piece of luggage that is easy to carry. When packing, ensure that your electronic items are stored safely as luggage sometimes is thrown about by airline staff or may fall during the excursions. The program cannot replace broken equipment and it is your responsibility to ensure its safety.

If carrying prescription medications, you should carry a letter from your doctor to prevent any concerns at customs or in transit. (Please see the "General Health Tips" section in the [Safety, Security, and Health](#) pre-departure document.)

Please check the current requirements of the Transportation Security Administration (<http://www.tsa.gov>) as well as those of the airline on which you are flying for domestic and international baggage restrictions.

CLOTHING GUIDELINES

Ugandans dress conservatively and are often stylish. The clothes that you bring should all be washable and breathable, preferably drip-dry cotton and cotton-blends. Note that depending on where you are going or what you are doing, it is expected that you dress in a culturally appropriate manner. During lectures, you will be expected to wear simple but tasteful dresses, skirts, shirts, trousers/pants and have your hair properly combed or brushed. Do not bring sloppy clothes or clothes with immodest pictures or writing on them. Revealing clothing and very informal clothing, such as tank tops, are not acceptable.

Smart-looking casual wear is often recommended during the Independent Study Project time and site visits to places such as parliament, health centers and offices of non-governmental organizations. During excursions we dress a little more freely given the hardships of travel so jeans and pants below the knee are suitable. Shoes to be worn will depend on the nature of activities but in most cases, open-toe shoes are allowed. However, for official travel and site visits we recommend closed-toe shoes. Night temperatures tend to drop at higher elevations, at which the program will spend some time. Therefore, you will need a light coat or fleece, and waterproof rainwear. Plan to buy any new clothing you need once you are in Uganda. This will be further discussed on arrival.

EQUIPMENT

Bring one or two small combination locks for the zippers of your luggage, a bottle opener, and a travel alarm clock. You will need a small flashlight and past students have highly recommended bringing a headlamp as your flashlight. A mini-Maglight held by a headband, available at Campmor or at other outdoor stores in the U.S., is one cheap solution. Bring plenty of extra batteries and **remember to bring a tent (preferably mount expedition tents with metal poles not fiber poles).**

In addition, you should **bring a lightweight sleeping bag or bed sheet and a sleeping mat to use from time to time while on excursions.** You need not bring a mosquito net because they are available and very inexpensive in Uganda, about US\$10-US\$15.

Should you have a preference of nets, visit Travel Medicine, Inc., which has several good models available. You can reach them at <http://www.travmed.com> or call 1-800-872-8633. If you choose to buy a mosquito net in Uganda, you can purchase one that has been treated with Permethrin, a chemical that repels mosquitoes, or you can purchase an untreated mosquito net.

COMPUTERS AND OTHER ELECTRONICS

It is strongly recommended that you bring a laptop computer. If you bring a laptop, the computer will be

your personal property and responsibility. It is recommended that you insure your computer, smart phone or other valuables for full coverage in the event of loss or theft. SIT is not responsible for any duty tax you may have to pay when you enter the country, theft, or loss.

Previous students on the program have found it convenient to bring their own laptops. If you choose to bring one do not entrust it to any stranger as this has often resulted in theft. Do not pull out your laptop in the taxi, bus or during travel in general because this attracts pick-pockets and thieves. Although SIT will provide a secure place for you to lock up your laptop and other valuables at the resource center during the day, you are still responsible for the safety of all your belongings. You will also be responsible for arranging to store your laptop in a secure place while on excursions, should you choose to bring one.

For students that do not bring computers, the SIT Resource Center in Kampala has one laptop which is compatible with flash drives. As you will often need computer time, there may be times when this laptop is not available. Some assignments may be hand written while others must be word-processed. SIT will provide you with a wireless modem with which you can access internet while at the centre. The modem will be loaded with access time that should last until the end of the semester depending on your usage. Otherwise if it runs out, you'll need to use the services of an Internet cafe in Kampala or recharge it. You should find the Internet cafe rates affordable--approximately 150 Uganda Shillings per minute or less (which equals about 3 cents/minute). Some students have brought dongles to be able to access emails and internet from the areas which do not have wifi. During the Independent Study Project phase, many students can find access to computers through their advisors, organizations, or local universities.

Students will be required to print out their word-processed assignments. Printing resources available to the students should therefore be used sparingly throughout the program. Any subsidiary printing that is not required by the program will be the responsibility of the students. Internet cafes are often a good place to process personal work. During the Independent Study Project time, you are given a per diem to cover your room and board. In reality, it usually covers much more than this, and students use it to cover related costs like their translator/guide,

or local travel and printing/photocopying of the ISP reports.

Please see the following website for information about electricity, voltage and electrical adapters. <https://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plug-voltage-by-country/>.

Before you leave, it is up to you to research the necessary adapters, plugs, and wattage variations. Power goes out unexpectedly in Kampala and this poses a great risk to electronics. Students are therefore advised to bring power stabilizers to protect their equipment. Also, make sure you come with the necessary adapters and converters.

Portable music players, such as iPods players, are recommended for students to bring. **However, students will be responsible for the security of their equipment.** Digital recorders will be useful especially during Independent Study Project time. The program will provide students with mobile phones during their stay in Uganda.

WHAT YOU CAN AND CANNOT OBTAIN IN COUNTRY

Personal items such as preferred tampons, sanitary napkins, contact solution, deodorants and face wash are available, but they may be difficult to find and somewhat expensive. Plan to bring hand washable clothes, which will make your hand washing much easier. If you wear glasses or contacts, bring an extra pair. Be sure to pack enough contact lenses and solution for the whole semester. Bring your prescription, just in case.

ALUMNI CONTACTS

If you have further questions, please contact your admissions counselor and/or ask an alumni contact: <http://studyabroad.sit.edu/admitted-students/contact-a-former-student/>.

Don't miss the Packing List on the next page!

These packing guidelines are based on suggestions from past students and your Academic Director.

PACKING LIST

General

- 1 pair of nice shoes
- Supportive tennis shoes (optional)
- 1 pair of comfortable sandals
- 1 pair of flip-flops or other casual indoor shoes
- 1 pair of business casual shoes
- Light jacket or waterproof windbreaker
- Medium-weight wool/polar fleece sweater (for cool nights)
- Pullover or light sweater
- 1 “workout” outfit (could include T-shirt / CONSERVATIVE shorts for jogging/sports)
- 2-3 pairs of lightweight business casual pants, capris are recommended for the hot weather, darker clothes/pants are easier to clean
- 2 business outfit for formal interviews with officials of government
- Light fabric blouses/short-sleeved shirts, mostly business casual
- Several collared shirts (but short sleeves are OK)
- Underwear (two weeks’ supply)
- 5-7 pairs of pants (khakis, lightweight cotton, comfy pairs for cold weather, jeans, business casual, skirts, dresses, etc.)
- 2 pairs of short shorts for excursions
- 1-2 sports bras for “workout” outfit
- 1-2 nice outfits (slacks, dress shirt)
- 1 pair of bathing suit/ swimsuit ((one-piece recommended)
- Sanitary items (e.g. pads, tampons, diva cup etc.)
- 1 towel
- 6-12 pairs of socks
- Tie
- Tents (preferably mount expedition tents with metal poles not fiber poles)
- A lightweight sleeping bag/bed sheet and a sleeping mat

Travel Documents

- Passport
- Yellow WHO Card (see the [Safety, Security, and Health](#) document for more information)
- Proof of COVID-19 Vaccine
- Two photocopies of your passport stored separately from your actual passport
- Photocopy of visa

Health/Toiletries

- Medication/prescriptions used regularly
- Good quality thermometer (for taking your temperature)
- Aspirin or other pain reliever, cold medication/decongestant
- Anti-diarrheal medicine/laxatives
- Eye drops and eyewash
- Contact lenses
- Travel sickness medicine if you are prone to motion sickness
- Sunscreen/solarcane spray and Aloe Vera
- Band aids/antiseptic/antibacterial cream
- Deodorant
- Soap and shampoo
- Mosquito repellent (two bottles)
- Vitamin supplements (if you take them)
- Hand wipes and/or antibacterial hand wash
- Malaria Prophylaxis (bring enough for the entire semester)
- Allergy medicine
- Dental floss
- Tissue packs

Other Important Items

- Student ID from your home college/university
- Daypack or book/shoulder bag
- Light raincoat—something that folds up small
- Water bottle
- Sturdy folding umbrella
- Towel
- Extra pair of glasses/contacts if you wear them
- Money belt large enough for passport and money
- Extra batteries for all electronic items
- Homestay gifts (for day visits)
- Flash drive
- Converters/adapters

Optional

- Granola bar/energy snacks
- Pocket sewing kit
- Sunglasses, if you use them
- Flashlight/headlamp
- Camera and batteries or charger

- U.S. postage stamps (to send letters back to U.S. with departing travelers)
- Small audio recorder for practicum
- Powdered drinking mix
- Travel pillow
- Kindle reader
- MP3 player or iPod
- Flashlight/head lamp
- Photos of your family, friend, and small portable book about sewing state.

To prevent the contraction and spread of COVID-19 students should come prepared with:

- At least 3 reusable masks* and gloves for personal protection (disposable masks will also be available)

- Hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol for use when soap and water is not readily available
- Anti-bacterial wipes or solution to wipe down high-touch surfaces, especially while traveling from the US
- Cover your mouth and nose with a mask when around others. Masks help reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19 both by close contact and by airborne transmission. Masks must have two or more layers of washable, breathable fabric. Do not wear face shields alone (evaluation of the effectiveness of face shields is ongoing but is unknown at this time).