

# UGANDA

THE  
PLACE  
TO BE!

Joan Kamukama

## **UGANDA – THE PLACE TO BE!**

**By Joan Kamu**

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Uganda is a land locked country located in East Africa. It's bordered by Kenya, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Tanzania and Rwanda. Its population is up to 35.6 million and covers an area of 241,038 sq km (93,072 sq miles). Languages spoken include English which is the official language, Swahili, Luganda, as well as a numerous other Bantu and Nilotic languages. Major religions are Christianity, Islam. Life expectancy 54 years (men), 55 years (women) and the economy comprises of the majority of people living below the poverty line.

The country is famous throughout the world because of the presence of the gigantic Lake Victoria in its Southern region. Winston Churchill

famously labeled Uganda as the 'Pearl of Africa'. The country offers some of the most breathtaking wildlife terrain in the world.

### **The people and their cultures**

The Bantu-speaking tribes include the Baganda from the central region and, the Banyankole, Batooro, Banyoro, Bakiga, Bafumbira, Bakonjo, Bamba, Banyarwanda and Batwa from the western region, plus the Basoga, Banyole, Bakenye, Bagishu, Bagwe, Bagwere from the eastern region. There are Ateso, Jopadhola and Karimojong, Kumam, Jonam, Sebi, Pokot (Suk) and Tepeth from the northeastern area, and the Nilotics who include the Acholi, Alur, Langi, Lugbara, Madi, Kakwa in the north. The Lendus from Zaire are also found across the border in Northwestern Uganda.

English is the official language. Many people outside the office also commonly speak it. Luganda is easily the more spoken language in most towns where business is transacted. This is as a result of British colonial rule where the indirect policy of rule used Baganda chiefs to oversee their business. For many years the Luganda Bible and primer was the only available source of education in most Bantu-speaking districts of Uganda and could easily have become the official language but the other districts will hear none of that. Kiswahili is spoken but not without relative unease because of its association with bad rule and soldiers who went on butchering people in the bad regimes. Neighboring Kenya and Tanzania have happily embraced Kiswahili which is freely spoken in parliament, but not in Uganda, where despite Government efforts to make it a course language in primary and secondary schools parents are reluctant to embrace it. A number of Languages like Runyakitara and Luganda are examinable as degree courses at Makerere University. Kiswahili has been introduced there as well.

Uganda is a country of many cultural contrasts. For example, in the central there is the Baganda. Buganda's clan system is central to its culture. A clan represents a group of people who can trace their lineage to a common ancestor in some distant past. In the customs

of Buganda, lineage is passed down along patrilineal lines. The clan essentially forms a large extended family and all members of a given clan regard each other as brothers and sisters regardless of how far removed from one another in terms of actual blood ties. The Baganda took great care to trace their ancestry through this clan structure. A formal introduction of a muganda includes his own names, the names of his father and paternal grandfather, as well as a description of the family's lineage within the clan that it belongs to. The clan has a hierarchical structure with the clan leader at the top (owakasolya), followed by successive subdivisions called the ssiga, mutuba, lunyiriri and finally at the bottom the individual family unit (enju). Every Muganda was required to know where he falls within each of these subdivisions and anyone who could not relate his ancestry fully was suspect of not being a true Muganda.

If you go west to Mbarara District, you will meet the Bahima, a race of Ankole. This is an egalitarian group of tall beautiful people who live on their cattle, milk and ghee. They move from place to place in search of grass for their herds. The men are agile, temperamental when confronted and wear the elaborate shuka, a long woven cloth of rich colours around the shoulder and a handy stick in hand to shoo cows or fight the enemy. Their fat wives who walk in the same graceful manner like the cows, live on milk and equally wear colourful clothes. The women are usually of ample girth with beautiful chocolate coloured gums and extremely white teeth. The Bahima have strengthened their lives around cows and milk. Many of their long-horned, graceful cows are given names to which they respond when called. There is a rich folklore of songs and dance among the Bahima, including some elaborate poems and recitals which give praise to the best cows or narrate some long journeys. Owing to the increasing shortage of cows and land, they are slowly settling down to a more sedentary way of life.

Other tribes in Uganda include the Batooro, Banyoro, Bakiga, Bafumbira, Bakonjo, Bamba, Banyarwanda and Batwa from the western region, plus the Basoga, Banyuli, Bakenye, Bagishu,

Bagwe, Bagwere from the eastern region. There are Bateso, Jopadhola and Karimojong, Kumam. Jonam, Sebi, Pokot (Suk) and Tepeth from the northeastern area, and the Acholi, Alur, Langi, Lugbara, Madi, Kakwa in the north. The Lendus from Zaire are also found across the border in Northwestern Uganda.

## **Traditional dressing**

Ugandans love colour, they use the silk and cotton as the fabric for their clothing and prepare very colorful dresses, as normally the people of other African people wear. The traditional dress of Uganda comprises of many variations, however, the most popular of them in women and men is **Gomesi** and **Kanzu**. Although, historically the population is of Uganda, which was consisting of many ethnic groups used to wear clothes made out of bark cloth and animal skins. These garments include the double piece clothes to cover the upper and lower body parts. The pure traditional dresses of the **Ugandan people** also consisted of many personal adornments like body marks, tattoos and facial paintings. Similarly, they were also fond of wearing various ornaments like bracelets, earrings, nose pins, beads and headdresses. Ankle jingles, bird feathers and cowrie shells also played an important role in the adornments of the people of Uganda.

The Gomesi is basically a floor-length, brightly colored cloth dress with a square neckline and short, puffed sleeves. The dress is tied with a sash placed below the waist over the hips. The Gomesi has two buttons on the left side of the neckline. Gomesi is the present national attire for the women of Uganda which they also use, not only in day to day wear but as the special functional dress too. A well-made Gomesi can require up to six meters of cloth. Although, in the urban areas of Uganda, the women have a trend to use the western garments but overall, the majority of the Ugandan women dislike the western dresses.

## **Politics and Leadership**

Uganda follows a democratic system of governance with Yoweri Museveni and his National Resistance Movement taking leadership without interruption since seizing power in 1986. He won the 2011 presidential elections after a 2005 constitutional amendment lifted presidential term limits, and went on to win again in 2016. The opposition and independent observers have complained about the fairness and transparency of these and earlier polls. Mr. Museveni has been credited with restoring relative stability and economic prosperity to Uganda following years of civil war and repression under former leaders Milton Obote and Idi Amin. But he has also faced UN criticism for his role in the conflict in DR Congo. More recently, Uganda has been accused of aiding rebels there.

### **Climate and Weather**

Uganda is sunny most of the year with temperatures rarely rising above 29 degrees (84 degrees Fahrenheit). The average annual temperature is about 26 degrees Celsius (78° Fahrenheit). The rainy season is from March till May and October till November. Light rain season falls in November and December. Dry seasons are from December to February and June to August.

The best time, the best months of the year would be December to late February and from June to September.

**Tourism** Uganda's most famous tourist places include the Ajai Game Reserve, the Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, the Mgahinga Gorilla National Park, the Kidepo Valley National Park, the Murchison Falls National Park, the Queen Elizabeth National Park, the Kibale Forest National Park, the Rwenzori National Park and the serene Ssese Islands among others. Here in this article we have compiled a list of some of the top 10 best tourist places in Uganda that must be on your list if you are planning a tour to this wonderful country.

Located along the Equator, being called the Pearl of Africa is not without reason. Uganda is one of the most captivating destinations in

Africa it's a destination that has been visited by many travelers including explorers who came around the mid 1880s, seeking to find the Source of the Nile River! Up to today, Uganda attracts thousands of visitors who take different adventures in its countryside with the most popular being gorilla tracking in the ancient tropical rainforests of Western Uganda in Bwindi impenetrable forest. Other attractions include:

- Queen Elizabeth National Park. This is the second most popular tourist destination taking Uganda Safaris. It is the most popular destination for holiday makers having a big population of tree climbing lions.
- Murchison Fall National park. This is a renowned safari park with diverse fauna and flora, home the great scenic Murchison falls and a variety of animals, birds and plants.
- Rwenzori National Park This is also known as the mountains of the moon; Rwenzori Mountain is one the best places for hiking to the glaciated peaks.
- Kibale Forest National Park. This is the best place for chimpanzee tracking while in Uganda. The forest has over 13 primates that thrive in the forest.
- Kidepo National Park. This is located in the extreme northern part of Uganda, Kidepo has an amazing array of wildlife and it's indeed the best for game viewing.

***Uganda “FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY” Uganda***