

**UGANDA**  
**THE PEARL OF AFRICA**



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# UGANDA

## I. INTRODUCTION

Uganda, also known as the “Pearl of Africa,” is a landlocked country located in East Central Africa. After independence in October 1962, Uganda had a flourishing economy, and an impressive number of educated and prosperous middle-class African professionals, including business people, doctors, lawyers, and scientists. However, Idi Amin's 8-year rule (1971 and 1978) produced economic decline, social disintegration, and massive human rights violations.

The governments that followed the overthrow of Idi Amin, were no better. Between 1979 and 1986 those regimes had one of the world's worst human rights records. It is estimated that over 500,000 civilians were brutally murdered during that dark period in Uganda's history.

During the 1990's, remarkable progress has been made by President Museveni's government which came into power in 1986. Uganda today is a model of peace, success and prosperity in Africa both socially and economically with astonishing growth rates of 6-7%!

## II. LOCATION & GEOGRAPHY

### *A. Location*

Located in Eastern Africa, Uganda, crossed by the equator is bound by Rwanda, Lake Victoria and Tanzania to the south, Kenya to the east, Sudan to the north and Democratic Republic of the Congo (Zaire) to the west. Most of the country is a vast plateau with the main mountain ranges of Mufumbiro and Ruwenzori located in the west as well as Mt. Elgon to the east.

### *B. Size (Area)*

Uganda is about the size of Oregon. The area is about 241,136 sq km. About 20% of Uganda's surface is covered in water (Uganda takes up 48% of Lake Victoria.) It has a population of about 23 million people.

### *C. Elevation*

Uganda's lowest point is Lake Albert, at 62.1m altitude. The highest point, Maragheritta Peak is on Mt. Stanley at 5,110 m. Although Uganda lies astride the equator, most of Uganda is on a plateau 900-1,830 m above sea level.

## III. GENERAL FACTS

### *A. Climate*

1. Seasonal temperatures range from 20° to 28°C. Uganda has equatorial climate.
2. There are two seasons, a rainy season and dry season. The rainy season is from March to June. December-February and June-July are the driest times, when things can even be a bit dusty. Uganda's yearly precipitation exceeds 1,500 mm.

### *B. Demographic statistics*

1. Urban-Rural; 11.3% urban, 88.7% rural (1991).
2. Sex Distribution; 49.0% male, 51.0% female (1991).
3. Life Expectancy at Birth; 49.4 years male, 52.7 years female (1990).

4. Age Breakdown; 48% under 15, 26% 15 to 29, 14% 30 to 44, 7% 45 to 59, 4% 60 to 74, 1% 75 and over (1985).
5. Birth Rate; 50.1 per 1,000 (1990). Death Rate; 15.4 per 1,000 (1990). Increase Rate; 34.7 per 1,000 (1990).
6. Infant Mortality Rate; 103.0 per 1,000 live births (1990).

### *C. Natural Resources*

1. Copper is Uganda's most valuable mineral. There have also been sightings of gold, tungsten, tin, lead, and wolfram.
2. The vegetation ranges from dense rainforests to grasslands in the south and east, high altitude and moorland in the west, and arid savanna and marshy wetlands in the north.
3. From 1990 the natural wildlife is starting to recover from the time of civil war when numerous species were almost extinct. Uganda is the easiest place to observe primates.
4. Uganda has many lakes including Lake Edward, Lake Albert, Lake Kyoga, Lake Mburo, and Lake Victoria. River Nile has its source in Uganda. It is one of the longest rivers in the world. It is a major source of hydraulic electricity at the Owen Falls Dam.

### *D. Economy*

#### *a. Manufacturing/Leading Industries*

1. Some major goods in Uganda are coffee, tobacco, beef, milk, and poultry.
2. Important exports include gold, cotton, and tea.
3. Vehicles, petroleum, medical supplies, and cereals are some major imports.
4. Uganda Textiles, BAT Tobacco Company, Italian Company, and Lake Victoria Bottling Company are some Ugandan leading companies.

#### *b. Agriculture*

1. Major crops in Uganda include cassava, potatoes, corn, millet, bananas and vegetables.
2. Other important exports are fish, flowers, and horticultural products.
3. Coffee is Uganda's most important export.

### *E. History*

a. The first Europeans came in 1862. Uganda became an independent country on October 9th 1962.

b. There are four main ethnic groups in Uganda which all have different origins. By far the largest in number, the Bantus, who came from the west, include the tribes of Buganda, Banyankole, Basoga, Bakiga, Batoro, Banyoro, Banyarwanda, Bagisu, Bagwere and Bakonjo. The Nilotics, who came from the north, include the Lango, Acholi, Alur, Padhola, Lulya and Jonam. The NiloHamitics include the Teso, Karamojong, Kumam, Kakwa, Sebei, Pokot, Labwor and Tepeth and the Sudanics include the Lugbara, Madi and Lendu. The different tribes got their names either from their leaders or something in their customs or origins.

At the time of the first exploration of Uganda there were three main kingdoms, each ruled by a king and laws and customs of their own. These were the kingdoms of Buganda, Kitara (subdivided into Bunyoro and Toro) and Karagwe. Over the following centuries, the Buganda people created the dominant kingdom. Arab traders and European explorers came in the mid-19th century in search of ivory and slaves and other trade. After the Treaty of Berlin in 1890, Uganda became a British protectorate. The colonial rulers used the Baganda tribes people for the civil service. Other tribes people, unable to get jobs in the colonial government were forced to seek other ways of gaining influence. The Acholi and Lango, for example, were dominant in the military. Thus were planted the seeds for the intertribal conflicts that were to tear Uganda apart following independence.

c. Uganda gained independence on October 9, 1962.

d. Milton Obote became president soon after independence. He was oppressive, and was replaced by Idi Amin through a military coup. Idi Amin was president of Uganda from 1971 to 1979. He oppressed Uganda for eight years and destroyed much of the country's resources and killed many people. In 1986 Yoweri Museveni took over Uganda and has helped modernize the nation.

#### *F. Government*

- a. Uganda has a republic government.
- b. The head of the government is the president, who right now is Yoweri Museveni.
- c. The President and the Prime Minister are at the top of the government organization. The cabinet of ministers, the Prime Minister and the judges are appointed by the President from among elected people.
- d. The Prime Minister aids the President in supervising the cabinet chosen by the President. The government executes the constitution. The English Common law is in effect.

#### *G. Transportation*

- a. Uganda has twenty-seven airports. Entebbe is the only international airport in Uganda. There are scheduled internal flights to certain towns in northern, western and south-western Uganda from and to Entebbe International Airport. Charter flights are also available to any part of the country.
- b. Uganda has only one railroad line, the Uganda Railway. Buses and "taxis" (minibuses) are the commonest means of transportation around the towns. They are not as easily available in the remote areas. Recently, there has been a rise in the number of motor cycles, so called "Boda boda matatus". They are the way to go when one needs to get through the morning, afternoon and evening city traffic jam. Buses and taxis don't keep specific timetables. They take off as soon as they have enough passengers. For private transport, you can rent a vehicle, self-driven or with a driver, from the many car rental companies, including international ones like Hertz and AVSI. There are also the so-called "special hire" taxis (regular taxis or cabs) which will deliver to any place. They don't use meters, so be sure to agree on the charge before you set off.
- c. Uganda has many rivers including Victoria Nile, Albert Nile, Kafu, and Semliki.
- d. Uganda has 300km of waterways. Almost a third of Uganda is covered by water. While not well developed, water transport, both traditional and modern is available. There are ferry services to the islands on Lake Victoria, and also across the River Nile at various points along the river. Traditional canoes (manual or motorised) can also be hired at the various landing sites in the country. Motorboats can also be hired through tour operators.
- e. MTN is Uganda's leading telecommunications network. Radio Simba is one of Uganda's radio stations as well as AM7 and FM33. Cellphones services are readily available, and have helped communication in Uganda improve a lot.

#### *H. Culture*

- a. In Uganda, over 33 native languages are spoken. English is the official business and education language. Many people also speak Luganda and Swahili.
- b. October 9, 1962 is Uganda's independence day and they also celebrate New Years Eve, Christmas, Easter and Valentines Day. Martyr's day (June 3) and Labor Day (May 1) are also celebrated.
- c. Uganda's currency is the shilling. One thousand shillings equal one U.S. dollar.
- d. Uganda's educational system is modeled on Britain's and was originally developed by missionaries but is now run prosperously by the private sector.
- e. Ugandans enjoy golf, basketball, soccer, running track, and drag racing as sports.
- f. Tourism is a favorite pastime. The superb beach resorts are favorite pastimes for the Ugandans.

- g. About 60% of Ugandans profess Christianity. The Muslims are about 16.6% of the population. The rest are traditionalists.
- h. Because of the diverse tribes in Uganda, there are many customs and traditions practiced. For example in many of the tribes, there are ceremonies performed for marriages, such as the introduction of the groom-to-be to the bride-to-be's family (similar to engagement party). During the ceremony, the groom's family brings a dowry and other gifts to the bride's family. Before the actual wedding, there are other traditions, such as presenting a young goat to the bride. The coming of age is also an important time. Among the Bagisu, there is a male circumcision ceremony for young men who are becoming adults. Many of the traditions are based on old beliefs of things that would ward off bad luck or bring good luck. In the cities and towns, many of these traditions are not practiced any longer, or have been changed.

*I. Public Holidays*

1st January	-New year's day
26th January	-Liberation day
8th March	-Women's day
1st May	-Labor day
3rd June	-Martyr's day
9th June	-Hero's day
9th October	-Independence day
25&26th December	-Christmas and boxing day

Changeable dates: Good Friday, Easter Monday, Eid-ul-fitr, Eid-ul-haji, Islamic new year, Prophet's birthday.

*J. Places to Visit*

- a. There are many interesting places to visit in Uganda. Some religious monuments include the Namirembe Cathedral, Bahai Temple, Kibuli Mosque, and the Namugongo Catholic Martyrs Shrine.
- b. The National Uganda Museum is found in Kampala. There, one can find beautiful artifacts from the ancient kingdoms.
- c. Kampala is the capitol and only city in Uganda. Jinja town is famous because it is a major industrial town. This is where the source of the River Nile and Bujagali Falls are found. Entebbe is the only town in Uganda with an international airport. It is also on the shores of Lake Victoria and has a beautiful botanical garden, and fabulous beaches. There is also a new four-star hotel near the airport.
- d. The Kasubi Tombs, bears the remains of three Baganda kings and is probably the largest royal hut in Africa. Around the country, there are other sites that mark important historical events, such as the Luwero Triangle, where Obote's men murdered numerous innocent villagers.
- e. The Nelson Mandela Stadium is located on the outskirts of Kampala. Uganda also has several game reserves and national parks, such as the Bwindi National Prk, where the "silverback" mountain gorilla can be sighted. There is also the Jane Goodall Monkey Conservatory, where one can see all kinds of primates in their natural habitat. The Nile, one of the longest rivers in the world, begins its journey in Uganda at the Source of the Nile.

## IV. CONCLUSION

Uganda is one of the most beautiful countries in Africa. A land that's painted in 1,001 shades of green with fantastic natural scenery. Located in eastern Africa, this landlocked country borders Sudan in the North, Rep. of Congo in the west, Rwanda and Tanzania in the South, and Kenya in the East.

It is moving to see how people who suffered so much have worked hard to overcome the nightmares of the past, regain their lives, and fight for a normal, settled life. Considering the lived-through horrors, most Ugandans are very satisfied with the development of the last ten years and they cherish the prevailing peace.

The beauty, wildlife, diversity, and friendly people led Winston Churchill to refer to Uganda as 'The Pearl of Africa'. And although at times the quality of the service might not be the best, the warmth accorded to visitors is impressive and the open, enthusiastic and contagious optimism can be felt. To visit Uganda is the opportunity of a lifetime.

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# FACTS PAGE

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## National Currency



Twenty thousand Uganda shillings  
(\$1.00 is about 1,600/=)

## National Flag



The black symbolizes Uganda as a black nation of Africa, the yellow sunshine and the red brotherhood. The raised leg of the crested crane symbolizes that Uganda is not stationary but moving forward.

## National Bird



The Crested Crane includes all the national colors (black, yellow, and red) plus it is friendly, gentle, and peace loving, characteristics true of the Ugandan people.

## Coat of Arms



The supporters on either side of the coat of arms are the Ugandan Kudu representing the wildlife of Uganda and the Crested Crane, the emblem for Uganda. The drum represents Uganda's culture. A drum chain can be used to transmit messages over a distance of 100 miles in less than one hour. The spears and shield are representative of Uganda's traditional form of weapons and symbolise the nation's defence and security.

The motto reads: "For God and My Country".

## **Ugandan National Anthem**

Oh Uganda may God uphold thee,  
We lay our future in thy hand,  
United free for liberty  
Together we'll always stand.

Oh Uganda the land of freedom,  
Our love and labour we give,  
And with neighbours all,  
At our country's call  
In peace and friendship we'll live.

Oh Uganda! the land that feeds us,  
By sun and fertile soil grown,  
For our own dear land,  
We shall always stand,  
The pearl of Africa's Crown.