



MISSION TEAM TRAVEL INFORMATION GUIDE



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INTRODUCTION

Buyamba welcomes all teams who are interested in serving on a short-term mission to God Cares Primary and Secondary Schools. We appreciate your support of this worthy ministry and your willingness to serve the orphaned and destitute children at God Cares. The Dongo family looks forward to hosting any team that wishes to travel to Uganda. They appreciate your generous help and labor of love and would like to assure you of the Ugandan government's stability and your general safety while in the Kampala area.

However, travel to Africa does require some preparation. We offer full support in answering the myriads of questions that teams have when considering a mission trip to Uganda; from questions on travel information and immunizations, to food and lodging and many other pertinent bits of information. We will even avail ourselves to provide a team leader for your trip, conduct in-person team briefings, when possible, or can do so via telephone or video conference. For your convenience, we have compiled this *Mission Team Travel Information Guide*, which covers detailed information, tips and FAQ's to assist team leaders in preparing your teams for travel as you answer God's call to His Great Commission.

SCHEDULING YOUR TRIP

If your church, school or group is interested in scheduling a short-term missions trip or would like further information about serving the children at God Cares School, please email info@ugandabuyamba.com or call the office at (805) 558-0089. Individuals interested in serving on an extended or long term mission may also call or email us at listed above.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

PASSPORT: You will need a current U.S. Passport book to travel to Uganda. You will also need at least two available blank pages in your Passport. We do advise that you make at least 2 extra copies of your passport photo identification page (one to leave at home and the other to take with you on your trip in a separate bag from your passport, should your original passport be lost or stolen). Team leaders should also insist on keeping an extra passport copy for each of their members in their possession. We also suggest that you travel with at least 2 extra passport photos.

VISA: A visa is needed for entry to Uganda. The cost is \$50 USD for single entry (valid for three months from the date of arrival). As of 2017 there is a new process in obtaining a Visa. It must now be done online and as such team members will need to submit copies of Yellow Fever shot records, passport, and passport photo in order to apply for the visa. An invitation from Uganda will also need to be submitted. For

this reason, the team leader(s) will be in charge of obtaining Visas for you. Visit www.ugandaembassy.com for more information.

FLIGHT INFORMATION

BOOKING: Tickets can be purchased with your travel agent. However, we recommend Leveta Thompson at Class Act Consultants (contact 800-453-8382 or levetathompson@yahoo.com) or Lindsey Schlabach or Marvin Mast at Golden Rule Travel (contact 330-353-8850 or 866-950-3273 or email lindsey@goldrule.net or marvin@goldenruletravel.com). They both specialize in booking travel for mission teams and may have ticket availability that other agents cannot access. You will be asked to provide EXACT passport name, passport number, and date of birth for each team member. Frequent flyer numbers may also be used if applicable. Keep any special seating and meal requirements in mind when booking.

Prior to booking, please pre-arrange and confirm your proposed dates with us. Once you have booked your flight, please forward that information to Julie Dimas at julie@ugandabuyamba.com, as soon as possible.

FLIGHT TIME: It is a long flight to Uganda (about 22 hours of air travel at minimum, depending on your choice of airline carrier and ticketed route). Please encourage your team members to wear comfortable, loose clothing and be sure to drink lots of water throughout your flight. Staying hydrated can help reduce susceptibility to illness.

BAGGAGE/CARRY ON: Be sure to have a change of clothes, toiletries and important medications in your carry-on. In other words, be prepared in the event your luggage does not arrive with you at Entebbe so that you will have something to meet your immediate needs. Some bags have been misplaced on several of our team trips.

Airlines generally allow two 50 lb. (max) bags per passenger (U.S. passengers), plus one - two carry-on items with a collective max of 26 lbs. However, airlines are continually revising their baggage policies. Please verify the current baggage weight and dimension allowances with your airline. Rubbermaid tubs (or other brands) are convenient to pack for traveling and great to leave at God Cares' children's center for additional storage, as they keep rats and bugs out.

We recommend taking an inventory and numbering each bag (even digital pictures). The team leader should have a copy of these numbered bag inventories with him/her for easy reference, should Ugandan Customs desire to conduct a search of a specific bag or suitcase. The team leader should also have the exact count of the number of bags for your team. Many teams use one of each team member's allotted bags for taking ministry materials and limit team members to one bag and their carry on allotments.

Bags should be weighed before leaving for the airport and rebalanced then, if needed. Using a common visual “flag” to identify your group’s bags is very helpful when arriving at Entebbe (i.e. colored team bag tags, attached colored ribbons to handles, or colored tape on multiple sides of the bags, etc).

CUSTOMS: You may pass through a Customs booth before you will see anyone in the main lobby of the airport. Please be courteous, but **do not volunteer any information that they do not ask.** Example: When the Customs agent asks you if you have anything to declare, you can ask, “Like what?” Let him list the things. Tell him that you are in his country to do mission work with God Cares School. Do not be surprised if you are not even asked to go through the custom stations.

IMMUNIZATIONS

The Yellow Fever vaccine has been the only immunization, requiring documentation, for travel to Uganda. **All visitors must be prepared to present a yellow fever certificate to the Uganda Immigration officials upon landing at Entebbe International Airport.**

Besides the Yellow Fever vaccine, the U.S Health Dept. also recommends Hepatitis A and B (if working with or near blood) and Typhoid. Prescription anti-diarrhea pills (usually Cipro), for traveler’s diarrhea, are also strongly recommended. With regards to obtaining immunizations in preparation for travel, there are many “Travel Doctors” around the country. However, county public health departments may offer the most inexpensive immunizations. **It is recommended that all immunizations be completed at least 3 weeks before your departure to Uganda.**

Malaria is a serious disease that can be fatal. There is no immunity to it. However, there are also precautions as well as treatments in the event that you might contract malaria. In order to prevent malaria it is advised that you take the following precautions:

- Keep well covered, especially from dusk to dawn. Mosquitoes are night feeders.
- Use the mosquito nets provided by your hotel.
- Use insect repellents with a high concentration of deet.
- Take anti-malarial medication before you come, while there and after you leave. There are several types available by prescription with varying effectiveness. Health professionals will discuss your anti-malaria drug options when you go to receive your immunizations. However, we recommend Malarone (www.malarone.com) for anti-malarial medication.

TRAVEL MEDICAL INSURANCE

Though we hope no one traveling to Uganda will ever need medical care, we do recommend that teams purchase group travel insurance including medical insurance. Your ministry insurance broker should be able to obtain a quote. If you plan to do construction projects, insurance costs will be higher. **Check the following sites for free and reasonable individual coverage quotes:**

www.travelinsurance.com

www.hthtravelinsurance.com

www.totaltravelinsurance.com

U.S. EMBASSY REGISTRATION

Please register your trip online with the U.S. State Department before traveling to Uganda. When an emergency happens, or if natural disaster, terrorism, or civil unrest strikes during your stay in Uganda, the embassy or consulate can be your source of assistance and information. By registering your trip, you help the embassy or consulates locate you when you might need them the most. Registration is voluntary and costs nothing, but it should be a big part of your travel planning and security.

Team leaders can do so at <https://travelregistration.state.gov>. Choose **“Register my Trip”** on the right hand side of the page, choose **“New Short Term Traveler”**, fill out the form, and click **“Continue”**. You can download a formatted Excel schedule from the site where you can enter all your team members’ information to expedite this process.

Team leaders should carry the following information on them at all times: **The U.S Embassy in Uganda is located near God Cares School at:**

Plot 1577 Ggaba Road,
Kampala, Uganda.

Tel: 0414 306 001 or 312 306 001

Fax: 0414 259 794 (Uganda country code from US is 256)

Website: <http://kampala.usembassy.gov/>

Email: kampalawebcontact@state.gov

TRANSPORTATION

We have an assigned ground team at God Cares Schools who will arrange for your transport to and from the airport, as well as all other transportation needs while you are in Uganda. For planning purposes, he will give teams an estimate of these costs as they do fluctuate with gasoline prices. The school is about a 40 - 55 minute drive from the Entebbe airport.

SPENDING MONEY AND CURRENCY EXCHANGE

The Uganda Schilling (UGX) is the country's national currency. The rate of exchange for the Uganda Schilling tends to vary between 3,400 to 3,700 UGX to \$1.00 USD. Do not expect to get the published rates in Uganda, you will often get less. Outside of Uganda do not expect to exchange UGX back to US dollars.

When traveling to Uganda, it is strongly recommended that visitors travel with U.S. currency in \$100 bills for the best conversion rates. These bills should be issued in 2007 or later (e.g. 2008, 2009, etc.) and be free of any tears or noticeable blemishes on the front or back (i.e. pen marks, stamps, writing, etc.) Bills issued earlier than 2007 will either be refused or accepted at a much lower conversion rate. The assigned ground team member will take the team to exchange their currency either the first or second day in Uganda.

Alternatively, if you have a Visa debit card, you may use it at most of the ATM machines in Kampala. However, we do not recommend this for if there is a problem, it is very difficult to get resolution in a short period of time and could detract from your trip. If you plan to do this, please inform your bank that you will be traveling to Uganda so that they don't put a hold on your account due to foreign withdrawals, and expect additional fees attached to your withdrawals. If you have a Bank of America account, you can withdraw money at any Barclays Bank free of fees.

Remember: \$100 bills issued in 2007 or newer are recommended.

Currency Converter (USD to UGX) at Yahoo Finance:

www.finance.yahoo.com/currency

ACCOMMODATIONS / FOOD / WATER

ACCOMMODATIONS: Accommodations are made and confirmed for all teams prior to their arrival in Kampala. Our ground team works with several nearby Christian guest houses and hotels for reasonable rates. Most of these properties are located within walking distance to the school. Teams can average approximately \$20 - \$25 per day for lodging for each team member (often less per couple). A fixed breakfast is included in these rates, usually coffee/tea, eggs, bread and fruit. **Mosquito nets** are provided for each bed along with linens. However, it is advised that teams bring their own linens and towels.

FOOD: Teams can budget about \$25.00/day per person for lunch and dinner. Bottled water is not included in this estimate and costs approximately \$7 per case (serves 2 people/week). Lunch is prepared daily at the school for the teams if requested. Dinner is sometimes prepared as well. However, teams are able to have

dinner at recommended local restaurants within the daily budget. Team members are advised to drink and brush their teeth with bottled water ONLY.

COMMUNICATION

Phone card minutes are also easily purchased as well as SIM cards (approximately \$20) for your international phone. Rates are very affordable when calling from Uganda to the U.S. using an international phone (approx. 5 cents a minute or less). To use your phone in Uganda, it must be at least a tri-mode phone with the GSM frequency of 900 and/or 1800 MHz. Buyamba has international ministry phones that may be borrowed, if available.

Keep in mind that most phones in the U.S. are locked and phone plans limited or very expensive. Please contact your provider for an unlock code or search the internet to purchase an unlock code and determine the cost to call back to the US. wireless service is also available via internet at the some of the hotels and internet cafés, but it may be slow. Teams may have access to an internet café within walking distance.

A USB hot spot stick (Orange) can be purchased along with a fixed amount of GB (approx. \$100) for use with a laptop for internet use, emails, and a team blog. Depending on the hotel, internet may be included in the price of lodging. Taking a laptop is risky and should be carried with the owner at all times. God Cares School does not have internet access or phones for calls to the US.

WHAT TO WEAR

Kampala temperatures are an average of 80-85 degrees Fahrenheit with high humidity. However, it can get cool in the evenings. A light sweatshirt or cardigan is recommended. Since it can rain regularly, a light weight, hooded rain jacket can be handy.

We recommend that women wear dresses or skirts long enough to cover the knees while sitting. They can also wear nice jeans or pants. No leggings or tight jeans allowed. Also, jeans and t-shirts are perfectly acceptable for those engaging in manual/hard labor (construction or agriculture). In order to respect the Ugandan culture, girls should refrain from wearing shorts in public, even at God Cares Schools. Modesty is the rule of thumb for all female team members. Please refrain from wearing mid-drifts, tops with spaghetti straps or visible bra straps.

Men should wear trousers (not jeans) and a collared shirt for church and all important occasions. Shorts and jeans are for work in construction or agriculture, teaching P.E., relaxing, and for very informal occasions. Many men on U.S. teams do wear shorts, but they should keep in mind what Ugandan's think if they wish to be

taken seriously (men wear pants, boys wear shorts). We have yet to see a local man wearing shorts.

Closed toe shoes are also recommended but sandals or thongs are fine to wear at the school as long as members are not engaging in construction. Apply DEET to your clothing, arms and legs before leaving your room in the mornings AND reapply at dusk – mosquitoes feed at night.

Please remember that you are a guest in Uganda and that the Ugandans dress formally especially at church. For example: someone that digs a ditch will wear office style clothing to work and change once he arrives at his place of employment. He will work all day in work clothes, but changes back into dress clothes to travel home—even if they are walking! Most teams find the Ugandans very smartly dressed. If you have any questions please ask the team coordinator.

TIME ZONES

Uganda is 3 hours ahead of Greenwich time, 8 hours ahead of Eastern time, 9 hours ahead of Central time, 10 hours ahead of Mountain time, and 11 hours ahead of Pacific time. Please note: these times are not including Day Light Savings time. Uganda does not practice Day Light Savings. Therefore, summer teams traveling to Uganda can expect the time difference to be 1 hour less than the above stated times (e.g. Uganda is 11 hours ahead of Los Angeles during the winter and 10 hours ahead during the summer).

SEASONS

Uganda does not have winter and summer, they have wet and dry seasons. The dry season is typically from December through February and in July. The wet season is typically from March through June and August through November.

GIFTS

- ALL gifts must be routed through the social worker's office whether the gift is for a child or an adult. If you wish to personally give a gift to a sponsored child, please ask the social worker first.
- Please do not give anything to the children without first speaking with the social worker. Gifts for our kids are a blessing, but can also promote a beggar mentality we wish to avoid among the children. If a child asks you for something, a strong “no, I can’t” is imperative to the request, you can say “but I will ask the social worker about that.”

DO's and DON'Ts

- Do show our children love and affection – lots of hugs; it is something they may never receive from their homes.

- Do make conversations with our children. They love hearing about the U.S. and sharing about their own lives.
- Do use discernment in displaying possessions. (iPods, iPhones, Blackberrys, etc.) You have more material possessions than they are used to.
- Do be prepared for people to stare at you. Don't be afraid to say hello.
- Do expect the possibility of being called "fat". "You are very fat" is a compliment!
- Do expect people to yell "mzungu" or "bzungu" toward you. It's an African word meaning "white person or persons". It is not an insult.
- Do expect to see men in Uganda holding hands. They are just friends.
- Do greet people you meet. It is good to shake hands with everyone you're introduced to.
- Don't consume alcohol at any time. Alcohol addiction is a serious problem in Uganda; many parents are drunk all the time. If the children see you drinking it will confuse them and seriously undermine the ministry of God Cares School. Our students walk past the restaurants all the time.
- Don't create an invitation for temptation. (e.g. leaving belongings unattended).
- Don't give the children things in front of other children unless you are intending to give them all something. Outgoing children get many gifts from visitors while shy children often get nothing.
- Don't believe every story a child tells you.
- Don't say things are better in the U.S. or worse in Uganda. You can say, "They are just different." Encourage them and lift them up as much as you can
- Don't take any child outside the school compound without written permission from the social worker or the headmaster.
- Don't move around alone if you are a woman. Within the compound of God Cares Nursery and Primary School, it is fine for women to walk from place to place by themselves.
- Don't move from the hotel or guest house unattended at night. Thieves and drunken people are walking around which poses a threat to one's safety.
- Don't give your contact information to anyone other than the God Cares social worker. If you want to find out the needs of a child/family at our school, the social worker is the most informed person regarding this information. It is against Buyamba policy to directly correspond with children or their families.
- Don't take photos of government buildings (e.g. U.S. Embassy) or police officers – you may have your camera taken.

SPONSORSHIPS

It is the sole responsibility of the Buyamba organization to oversee the Buyamba Orphan Sponsorship Program. When teams visit they see the great need and

desire to assist us in securing sponsors for the unsponsored kids. Any team member may begin to sponsor an unsponsored child at God Cares. They simply need to meet with the social worker at the school to get the child's information and then follow up with the California Buyamba office once they arrive home. Team members can also sponsor children when they get home by assessing the unsponsored children at ugandabuyamba.com or by calling the Buyamba US office. We humbly ask that teams not take any photos of children back to the U.S. to attempt to secure sponsors. Though we appreciate your kindness and willingness to help in this area, such action can result in erroneous record-keeping and multiple sponsorships of these children. However, if any team member desires to introduce the Buyamba Sponsorship Program to his/her home church, with the intent to host a sponsorship drive, please contact Julie Dimas at (805) 558-0089 or email her at Julie@ugandabuyamba.com. We will be happy to assist you in any way and will send the necessary materials to you (promotional DVD, photos, brochures, and "new sponsor" registration forms).

WHAT TO PACK

DEET is a MUST when traveling to Uganda. It is the most effective mosquito repellent.

Here is a suggested packing check list:

- ✓ Passport
- ✓ Yellow fever immunization card
- ✓ Malaria and anti-diarrhea prescription and non-prescription pills.
- ✓ Your personal medications
- ✓ Toiletries (soap/toothbrush/toothpaste/lotion etc.)
- ✓ Sunscreen
- ✓ Hand sanitizer
- ✓ DEET
- ✓ Bounce fabric softener sheets to place on your bed and between the sheets (it appears to repel mosquitoes)
- ✓ Comfortable summer clothes-jeans and T-shirts. (bring a dress/skirt for Sunday services for the ladies; a shirt and pants for the men)
- ✓ Closed toe shoes (sneakers preferably when we are working/walking and while on Safari).
- ✓ Light sweater/cardigan or long sleeve shirt for night time
- ✓ Rain jacket (optional ... but it does rain)
- ✓ Flashlight (as the electricity is turned off sometimes at night)
- ✓ Uganda uses 220 electrical outlets. We use 110 here in the U.S. Bring a 220 adapter and/or converter for each item that needs to be used or charged. Check each electrical device for power rating – most laptops range from 110 to 240, but will still need an adapter.
 - You may also purchase a power strip to charge multiple devices.
- ✓ Any snacks you enjoy eating (fruit bars/energy bars/peanut butter/jell etc.)

- ✓ Powdered water flavorings – to add to bottled water. e.g. iced Via is great for coffee.
- ✓ Camera and batteries
- ✓ A lock for your suitcase to lock up your valuables at the guest house or hotel any time you are away. Better to always carry with you.
- ✓ Small backpack or a fanny pack--to carry on plane and with you at all times (valuables).
- ✓ Bath towel
- ✓ Small emergency first aid kit
- ✓ Your own spending money - preferably in \$100.00 bills (2007 serials and newer).

Often, teams will want to empty their suitcases and leave their clothes behind for kids at God Cares. What a wonderful gift and demonstration of love. We humbly thank you!

SAFARI & Side Trips

On occasion, teams may request to participate on a safari tour. Interested teams must contact the Buyamba US office well in advance of your scheduled trip, and prior to booking your airfare, so as to secure safari reservations. Safari trips cost approximately \$150 - \$300 per person. This cost includes transportation, accommodations and tour fees. Food is not included, however. A deposit will be needed for your reservations.

Note: Teams will need to plan for allowing a minimum of 3 days for a safari trip.

MORE INFORMATION?

We trust that this information will serve as a helpful resource for your short term mission to Uganda. For further information, please contact the Buyamba office at (805) 558-0089 or email us at info@ugandabuyamba.com.

FAQ's (Frequently Asked Questions)

What can I expect with regards to lodging accommodations?

The lodging is quite comfortable and each property includes breakfast in their daily room rates. The Dongo family carefully screens and selects the lodging and you can rest assured that you will be comfortable and safe.

Are the bathrooms indoors or out?

The bathrooms are all indoors at God Cares Schools and at the church. All lodging accommodations have indoor bathrooms as well.

Is there electricity?

Yes, Uganda is wired for 220V electrical. You will need to bring an adapter and/or converter to use your electrical appliances. However, you WILL experience some power outages.

Is there hot/running water?

Yes, you will be able to take daily showers, but it may be cold water if there is an extended power outage (electric water heaters). But please refrain from drinking the tap water. We recommend using bottled water when brushing your teeth and rinsing your mouth.

What is the food like?

Very delicious! Teams will eat lunch at the school and sometimes dinner too, if so desired. You can expect to eat rice, a type of flat bread, ground provisions (vegetables), and your choice of beverage is usually bottled water. And for dessert?? The best pineapple you will ever taste. Teams should only eat at the restaurants recommended by the Dongo family to ensure freshness. Teams can expect pizza or continental cuisine for reasonable prices at these restaurants.