



GLI'S PRE-DEPARTURE GUIDE 2025

WELCOME TO GLI'S PRE-DEPARTURE GUIDE

This guide is designed to equip you with everything you need for your journey to East Africa with GLI. By the end of this guide, you'll be prepared for your adventure with a comprehensive understanding of important logistics, cultural insights, health and safety tips, and more. Whether this is your first international experience or you're a seasoned traveler, this guide will provide valuable information to ensure your trip is smooth, safe, and impactful.

SECTION 1: THE ESSENTIALS

Passport Requirements

A valid passport is required for all international travel. If you do not have a passport, you can apply for one via the [US Department of State website](#). The usual processing time is 4-6 weeks, but expedited options are available.

Your passport must be valid for at least 6 months after your scheduled return date. Please check your passport to confirm this and verify whether it needs to be renewed prior to your departure.

Visa Requirements

Your visa requirements will depend on if you are traveling to only Rwanda, only Uganda, or to Uganda *and* Rwanda. Furthermore, if you are traveling to both Uganda *and* Rwanda, your visa requirements will depend on which country you will enter first. Please see instructions below based on the scenario that applies to your specific trip and read the instructions carefully.

–UGANDA AND RWANDA–

If you are traveling to *both* Uganda and Rwanda, *you are required to obtain an East Africa Tourist Visa*. This type of visa will allow you to move across the Uganda-Rwanda borders without needing to purchase a second visa. It is valid for 90 days and it *costs \$100*.

Arriving in Uganda First?

If the first country you are visiting is Uganda, you must apply in advance via the [Ugandan Immigration Website](#). This site can be tricky to navigate, so please reach out to GLI staff if you need assistance.

Arriving in Rwanda First?

If the first country you are visiting is Rwanda, you can either:

- Obtain and pay for your visa upon arrival at the Kigali International Airport without prior application. Please be sure to bring \$50 USD (bills printed after 2006) to pay upon arrival.
- Apply and pay online in advance via the [Rwandan Immigration Website \(Irembo\)](#). If you choose to apply and pay in advance, please print your visa and bring it with you to Rwanda.

–RWANDA ONLY–

If you are *only* traveling to Rwanda, *you are required to obtain a single-entry tourist visa to Rwanda*. This visa is valid for 30 days and *costs \$50*.

You have two options to obtain your visa:

- Obtain and pay for your visa upon arrival at Kigali International Airport without any prior application. Should you choose to obtain your visa upon arrival in Rwanda, please bring with you a \$100 bill (printed after 2006) to expedite the payment process.
- Apply and pay online in advance via the [Rwandan Immigration Website \(Irembo\)](#) If you choose to apply and pay in advance, please print your visa and bring it with you to Rwanda.

–UGANDA ONLY–

If you are *only* traveling to Uganda, *you are required to obtain a single-entry tourist visa to Uganda*. This visa is valid for 90 days and *costs \$50*.

To obtain your single-entry tourist visa to Uganda, *you must apply in advance* via the [Ugandan Immigration Website](#). This site can be tricky to navigate, so please reach out to your contact at GLI if you need assistance.

****Please note that the information above is for US passport holders. If you are not a US citizen and need help with your visa process, please contact the GLI staff for assistance.*

Vaccines and Medications

All GLI travelers to Uganda and/or Rwanda must obtain a yellow fever vaccination and obtain prescription medication for malaria (unless otherwise indicated by a doctor). The CDC also recommends additional vaccines for this trip. Please see detailed information below.

Required Vaccine:

It is required that *all travelers receive and bring proof of a yellow fever vaccination*. It is often checked upon your arrival. Please contact your doctor or travel health specialist to book an appointment to get this done at your earliest convenience.

Recommended Vaccines:

The CDC recommends being up-to-date on all routine vaccinations prior to travel, including chickenpox, diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis, flu, measles-mumps-rubella, polio, and shingles. It also recommends vaccinations for Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, Typhoid, Meningitis, Rabies, and Polio. GLI strongly recommends consulting with your doctor or a travel health specialist when you get your yellow fever vaccination to go over your vaccination history to see which additional vaccinations your doctor recommends.

Malaria Medication:

The CDC also recommends that travelers going to Uganda take prescription medicine to prevent malaria. Depending on the medicine you take, you will need to start taking this medicine multiple days before your trip, as well as during and after your trip. Talk to your doctor about which malaria medication you should take, but popular medications include Malarone or Doxycycline.

Insurance Considerations

GLI strongly recommends that participants purchase insurance covering both health and for unexpected situations like trip cancellation, flight delay expenses, lost baggage, and emergency situations.

There are numerous travel insurance providers available. Two options GLI suggests are *Allianz* and *Travel Insured International*, both of which offer a variety of coverage plans at competitive prices.

SECTION 2: HEALTH AND SAFETY

Carrying Medication

Bring enough medication with you to avoid the need for prescription refills while you are on your trip. In case your medication is lost, carry a prescription from your doctor that includes the generic name and composition of the medication (as brand names may differ overseas).

Always transport medications in their original containers and keep all medications with you in your carry-on luggage; do not pack them in checked baggage. Note that medications available abroad may differ from those in the U.S.

First Aid Packing List

Below is a suggested checklist of medications and first-aid products that we recommend you bring on your trip:

- All your usual prescription medications
- Analgesics (e.g., Advil, Tylenol)
- Antacids
- Imodium AD
- Antihistamines (e.g., Claritin, Benadryl, Chlor Trimeton)
- Decongestant (e.g., Sudafed)
- 1% hydrocortisone cream
- Antibiotic ointment (e.g., Polysporin)
- Cipro (a prescription antibiotic useful for bacterial diarrhea, urinary tract infections, skin infections, sinusitis, etc.)
- Band-Aids of various sizes
- Extra contact lenses and/or glasses
- Usual testing and treatment supplies for diabetes or other conditions
- Doctor's prescription for syringes, if needed
- Epi-pens for severe allergies (e.g., bee stings, food allergies)

Mosquito Bites and Malaria

Malaria is a serious but preventable disease transmitted by mosquito bites, primarily from dusk to dawn when malaria-carrying mosquitoes are most active. Of course, your malaria medication as prescribed by your doctor will greatly minimize your risk.

That said, it is still smart to take further precautions such as wearing lightweight long-sleeved shirts and pants to cover exposed skin. Apply a repellent containing DEET (30-35%) or picaridin (20% or more) to exposed areas, focusing on wrists, ankles, neck, and behind the ears. Additionally, limit the use of perfumes or scented products, as these can attract mosquitoes.

Water, Food, and Diarrhea

Traveler's diarrhea is a common issue for those visiting less-developed countries, often caused by bacteria found in food and water. Your body is used to the bacteria in your local water, but drinking water from another country can introduce harmful bacteria that may cause illness. To protect yourself and stay healthy during your trip, follow these important guidelines:

- Drink only sealed bottled water. Ensure the seal is intact before opening.
- Canned or bottled carbonated drinks are safe to consume. Wipe the tops of cans and bottles before opening.
- Tea and coffee made with boiling water are safe to drink.
- Avoid ice unless it is made from boiled, bottled, or purified water.
- Brush your teeth with bottled water to avoid contamination from tap water.
- Keep your mouth closed while showering or swimming in untreated water to avoid swallowing any water.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap, or use antibacterial gel or wipes before eating, drinking, and after using the toilet.
- Avoid raw, undercooked, or cold meats and seafood as they may carry harmful bacteria.
- Be cautious with fresh fruits and vegetables. Only eat those with thick skins you can peel (like bananas, oranges, etc.). If you do eat fresh produce, wash it thoroughly with purified water before peeling. Avoid raw or pre-cut fruits and vegetables unless you know they were safely prepared with purified water and in sanitary conditions.

STEP Enrollment

The [U.S. Department of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program](#) (STEP) is a free service that allows U.S. citizens and nationals traveling or living abroad to register their trip with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. By enrolling in STEP, travelers receive important safety updates about their destination and enable the embassy to contact them in case of an emergency, ensuring added security and peace of mind while abroad.

We recommend enrolling in STEP prior to your departure.

Other Health and Safety Resources

If you would like to explore other resources related to health and safety in East Africa, we encourage you to check out the following resources:

1. [CDC's Travelers' Health website](#)
 2. [The US. Department of State Travel Advisories](#)
 3. [World Health Organization \(WHO\) Travel Advice](#)
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SECTION 3: SETTING EXPECTATIONS

Transportation Expectations

GLI staff will coordinate all of your transportation needs during your time in Africa.

In-country travel will primarily be by van, bus, or car. All drivers have been carefully vetted to ensure safe transportation by skilled and knowledgeable professionals. Traffic conditions, particularly in Kampala, can be unpredictable and may result in unexpected delays.

If your trip involves a stay at GLI's Entusi Resort and Retreat Center, you'll access the property via a 15-20 minute boat ride. We will ensure that life jackets are available for all travelers that want to use them. If you are at all uncertain of your swimming abilities, please use a life jacket. Ours are very stylish!

Airport Pickups

GLI staff arranges airport pick-ups and drop-offs for each of our travelers. When you exit the airport, please look for signage with your name, your school's name, or GLI. *Please do not accept a ride at the airport from anyone except for your assigned GLI driver.*

GLI's "Boda Boda" Policy

During your trip, you will see many people on motorcycle taxis. In Uganda, these are called "boda bodas." In Rwanda, they are called "motos." *Please note that GLI travelers are strictly forbidden from riding these motorcycle taxis due to safety concerns.*

Lodging Expectations

During your time in East Africa, you will likely stay in multiple different hotels or guest houses. All of the accommodations we stay at are *vetted, trusted, and secure.*

Accommodations during your trip may vary, and some hotels or guest houses may not meet the same standards of comfort or quality you might expect at home. While we select clean, safe, and hospitable lodging options, please understand that facilities in some areas may be more basic due to local infrastructure. We encourage travelers to embrace these experiences as part of the adventure and an opportunity to engage with the local culture.

Phone, Internet, and Data

Major cell phone providers offer a variety of international data packages for travelers. While GLI does not require participants to purchase an international cell phone plan, we encourage you to explore options with your provider if it will make you feel more comfortable during your trip. Many of the locations we visit will have WiFi access, but connectivity at many facilities will be limited. We recommend using this opportunity to stay present and immerse yourself in the East African experience.

For travelers staying for extended periods of time, ask our team about getting a SIM card upon arrival.

Sharing Your Experience

During and after your trip through East Africa, we encourage you to share your photos, thoughts, and blog posts with GLI online and on social media. If you'd like GLI to feature your travel blog, let your GLI contact know.

Also, please tag us on social media so we can share your amazing pictures, stories, and experiences. We are active on Instagram, X, and Facebook!

SECTION 4: PACKING

Packing Suggestions

Our primary suggestion is that you pack lightly for your trip. Keep in mind that you will be moving a lot from city to city, and therefore you will be responsible for carrying your luggage several times throughout the trip. Lightweight, hand-washable, and interchangeable clothing can be very useful. Also, avoid luggage that can be hard to carry or easily damaged. That said, we recommend packing one large bag and one backpack or daypack.

If you can pack everything into your carry-on luggage, fantastic. If not, no problem!

But if you do check luggage, we strongly recommend packing the items below in your carry-on luggage:

- Orientation Packet (printable version on Absorb)
- Reusable water bottle
- Passport and vaccination records
- Health insurance information
- E-tickets/flight itinerary
- All medications and a copy of any prescriptions
- Money: cash, ATM, or credit cards
- One change of clothing
- Toiletries (all liquids must be in plastic bottles, no larger than 3 oz)
- Copy of passport and other important documents (carry separately from original documents)

Adapters and Converters

A universal travel adapter with multiple plug types and voltage compatibility is highly recommended for convenience.

For Uganda and Rwanda, here's what adapters you need:

Uganda

- Plug Type: Type G (three rectangular pins in a triangular pattern)
- Voltage: 240 volts
- Frequency: 50 Hz

Rwanda

- Plug Types: Type C (two round pins) and Type J (three round pins in a triangular pattern)
- Voltage: 230 volts
- Frequency: 50 Hz

Packing List

As you prepare to pack, here are some items to consider:

- 4 to 5 changes of clothes
- One nice outfit (such as a collared shirt with pants or a top with a skirt)
- Good, comfortable walking shoes (closed-toe shoes or boots)
- Rain jacket or poncho
- Sweatshirt or light jacket
- Long socks
- Reusable water bottle
- Money for personal expenses
- Toiletries and personal items
- Travel tissue packets or a half-used roll of toilet paper
- Bathing suit
- Hat and sunglasses
- First aid kit and medications
- Sunscreen
- Insect repellent with DEET
- Pocket-sized hand sanitizer gel or wipes
- Snacks (like granola or meal replacement bars)
- Protective face mask
- Adapters and Converter

What NOT to Bring

- Avoid bringing watches or jewelry that appear expensive, even if they are not, as they may still attract unwanted attention.
- Leave unnecessary valuables or irreplaceable items at home. GLI is not responsible for lost or stolen personal property.
- Laptops are not recommended unless required for work or academic purposes. Consider bringing a smartphone or tablet for essential communication. Use internet access sparingly to send quick updates to friends or family, but avoid activities like streaming, video calls, or uploading large files. Download WhatsApp before departure to facilitate communication while traveling.

SECTION 5: CULTURAL TIPS

Gifts from Abroad

During your travel with GLI, you will undoubtedly form personal and lifelong relationships with the people you meet throughout East Africa. Because GLI partners with many different individuals and organizations, we ask that travelers refrain from promising to bring or send items to specific people. While we understand that you may form a special bond with someone, tension can arise in the communities we work with when one person or family receives gifts or items from GLI travelers. This can create expectations for services and resources that GLI is unable to fulfill. If you have gifts, school supplies, or other items you would like to donate, please let your GLI contact know so we can have our local team decide how best to distribute them.

SECTION 6: TRAVELER CONDUCT

GLI's Code of Conduct

In the spirit of GLI's vision – where people from all walks of life listen, think, and act together on equal footing to improve communities globally – we expect that everyone who travels with our organization or participates in a GLI program will be committed to the collaborative and positive exchange of culture and ideas.

However, we understand that travel can be stressful. While we encourage our program participants to get out of their comfort zone and experience new and, at times, difficult things, we also know that individuals are not always the best version of themselves when they are uncomfortable. That said, *conduct toward fellow GLI travelers, GLI staff, GLI partners, or community members that is disrespectful or abusive in nature will not be tolerated in any capacity.* The GLI reserves the right to discontinue participation on the trip or program with anyone who does not abide by this code of conduct.

Drug and Alcohol Policy

The use, transportation, sale, possession, distribution, purchase, or solicitation of drugs while traveling with GLI is explicitly forbidden. Travelers who require prescription medications from a medical doctor must be able to provide evidence of this requirement while participating in a GLI program. Illegal drug use in Uganda and Rwanda will be met with strict penalties. Violating drug laws can result in significant consequences that neither GLI nor the American Embassy will be able to mitigate.

Travelers are subject to the alcohol laws of Uganda and Rwanda. Currently, the minimum legal drinking age in both countries is 18. We ask travelers to familiarize themselves with and respect these laws before traveling with GLI. Alcohol can significantly impair judgment, and GLI requires travelers to practice moderation when consuming alcohol. Any behavior that jeopardizes the safety, quality of experience, or well-being of oneself or another traveler during alcohol consumption is considered alcohol misuse and will result in expulsion from GLI programming.

Violation of GLI's drug and alcohol policy will not be tolerated. Travelers found in violation of this policy will be required to withdraw from all GLI programming and return home. Travelers who violate GLI's drug and alcohol policy will not be eligible for a refund of any trip costs, projected or otherwise. GLI is not responsible for damages or costs incurred by travelers as a result of breaching this policy.

SECTION 7: SOME FINAL THOUGHTS

A Message from the GLI Team

We look forward to seeing you in Africa soon!

Our team is excited to welcome you to East Africa! We hope you have an incredible journey, filled with meaningful experiences, new connections, and lasting memories. Our team is here to support you every step of the way, so if there is anything you need or any questions you have before or during your trip, *please don't hesitate to reach out to us!*

We're looking forward to sharing this adventure with you. Safe travels and see you soon!

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