

Preliminary Introductory Information Pack for Uganda Exposure Trip, 2024

1 About the Exposure Trip

- We are purposely not calling this a “Missions Trip” as we are not going to Uganda to build something or teach people or convert people or leave some grand legacy or solve all their problems. Rather, we are going to Uganda to see and learn, to assist and work alongside, and to deepen relationships between Bethel and New Peninsula churches.
- You will be exposed to other ways of living life and of being an active Christian, and will see God at work in different ways to your normal experience.

2 Travel Details

- We expect the trip will occur during October, but the exact dates are highly fluid and will be negotiated to suit those who wish to travel. October was proposed as it suits Paul Crothers (who may or may not be going with us) and suits Vinnie, it is a good time of year to be there, and it gives plenty of time for people to get everything organized and to purchase flights at good prices early in 2024. (August is Bethel’s Anniversary month so it is another good option.)
- Flights are likely to be with Emirates or Etihad. Both are excellent airlines and provide good prices for flights, and both have short overall travel times, approx 22 hours. We will decide flights as a group, based on cost and timing.
- Flight departures are typically 9:30pm Melbourne, arriving in Uganda early afternoon (local time) the next day.
- In the past, the team would drive through hours of congested chaotic traffic in Kampala to Jinja to stay overnight at a guesthouse, take a charming boat cruise on the Nile River, then drive and arrive in Mbale late in the afternoon.
- We are considering staying overnight in Kampala, then flying with MAF (Missionary Aviation Fellowship) to Tororo in the morning, then a short drive to Mbale in time for lunch. The choice (drive or fly) will be made by the group in 2024
- The Trip usually includes a 3-day Safari, typically at the end of the trip. The safari is purely optional, but it is a great experience and a valuable time together to reflect on your time in Uganda before returning home.
- Usually the team travels together, but you can fly independently (eg. to skip the safari, to stay longer, or to travel to other countries). We can help organize your independent travel to/from Mbale, with trusted drivers.

3 Uganda and Mbale

- Uganda is roughly the same size as Victoria and has a population over 47 million, with 74% living in rural areas.
- The median age is 16 years old with life expectancy around 60 (males) and 65 (females).
- Most of the population are Christian, 15% are Muslim and many practice indigenous beliefs.
- Uganda became independent from Britain in 1962. There is no Australian Embassy in Uganda – Kenya is closest.
- The official languages are English and Swahili. Lugandan is the official native language spoken although there are over 40 different languages in Uganda spoken by the different regional, ethnic and tribal groups across the country.
- Currency is Ugandan Shilling (UGX) with \$1 = 2500 UGX approx. The US dollar is also used, mainly for businesses.



- In October, Mbale will be 8 hours behind Melbourne, and halfway between wet and dry seasons. Any weather is possible, but it should be mainly dry and mostly mid 20s. In the Murchison Falls safari area it will be warmer.
- Uganda is more stable and safer than most African countries, but the northern and western borders areas can be dangerous due to rebels from neighbouring countries. Kampala is one of the safest capitals in Africa, but terrorism and rioting protestors can occur, while bandits and criminals are active in more populated areas and roads.
- Mbale is the fifth largest city in Uganda with a population a little over 100,000 and growing fairly quickly. Bethel is located on the eastern outskirts of the city in a largely rural environment. For an aerial view of the Mbale area on the internet, go to (and zoom in): <http://maps.google.com/maps?f=q&q=1.0685,34.2064> (Bethel Church Mbale)

4 Bethel Church

- Bethel Baptist Church began in a school classroom in 2007. It grew rapidly and moved to adjoining land (donated by a British church) in 2008 and they built a modest church there using funds from New Peninsula.
- New Pen worked with Bethel to design a new building which is used as the main church for Bethel on Sundays and as a Community Centre for the rest of the week.
- A double-storey Training Centre has been built on site and it is a core focus for development. It is in heavy use, to train Bethel's own leaders, to give job skills to youth, and train people from other churches.
- Bethel has planted 12 other churches (including El Shaddai, Emmanuel, Victory, Bethany, Temple, Rock, Zion, Jordan, Trinity, Agape, Jerusalem) in the surrounding area, which had been a large centre for Islam and a stronghold for witchdoctors for many years. There are still many challenges for the planted churches and for the communities, but in general things are improving. You will have the opportunity to visit several of these smaller satellite churches all across the mountain and countryside. AND there are opportunities to preach, for anyone who would like to.



- Bethel churches use a mix of English and Lugandan, with translation, and lots of joyful worship, including dancing.
- Most Bethel members are fairly new Christians, converting from Islam or turning from traditional ancestor and spirit worship and witchdoctors. Many have been persecuted and ostracised by families and friends, although physical violence is rarer these days. Their faith is no small or private matter for them.
- Like the rest of their community, poverty is a big issue for Bethel people. This is made worse by the ostracism many face, and many leaders forego days of paid work to serve the church and the community.
- Vinnie and Grace, and Bethel Church too, are well known in the community for their long-term non-discriminatory aid and support to the poor and suffering all around them. This active and authentic love and grace has been a strong witness and helps them receive "a good hearing". While this provides a background for the rapid growth of Bethel, God is clearly at work in a special way: they often have new converts each week, even at funerals!
- Baptism services are large and joyful, often with over 100 people being baptized, wonderful to be there to witness.
- Bethel is an incredibly dynamic church, seeking new opportunities to reach out, aiming to improve life for the people in their community, and developing new leaders to train others. All members are encouraged to show God's love in practical ways and to make a difference wherever and whenever they can.
- As well as many aid ministries, Bethel runs a large Alpha program and a children's program with over 400 children.
- For more history and stories, see the Storybook produced by the Uganda Partnership Group (UPG).

5 Activities

- The example programme below is a quick impression of what to expect, but it is very fluid as to which days various things happen, and it will continue to change over the coming months. It will be shaped by your own interests and skills and by what will be happening in Bethel at the time. Bethel likes to plan most of the days for us and they are excellent hosts. The schedule will be adjusted before and while you are in Uganda.
- This example programme includes 16 days at Bethel in Mbale in early October. Allowing for travel and safari the total duration is 24 days, which makes it a fairly long visit, but it can be shortened if the group chooses.
- The actual length of the trip and the travel dates will be quickly negotiated by the team.
- Most days have some free hours and flexibility with what we do and when we do it.
- On several evenings we will disperse into smaller groups and visit Bethel people, for or after dinner in their homes.
- Other nights will be team times together, processing what we're experiencing.
- Each day there will be some private time to journal, reflect and commune with God.
- **While this is an Exposure trip, Bethel is hopeful some of the team may have knowledge or skills that they may be able to pass on to people at Bethel, or even to the wider community.**

EXAMPLE PROGRAMME (This is purely for illustration. Activities are decided by group and by Bethel)		
2	Wednesday	Depart Melbourne
3	Thursday	Arrive in Uganda, overnight in Jinja
4	Friday	Recovery day. Boat ride to see the source of the Nile. Have lunch and then travel to Mbale, arriving late afternoon. Dinner at Vinnie and Grace's.
5	Saturday	Visit Bethel's old Baptismal site at the waterfall and have time with Vincent and Grace. Continue settling in. Explore Mbale. Dinner at Bethel member's home
6	Sunday	Bethel Church in morning. Baptisms? Visit several of the satellite churches in the afternoon
7	Monday	Day out seeing Jenga's coffee enterprise and the community development that flows from it
8	Tuesday	Visit Micro Credit and Young Mums programs
9	Wednesday	Day out with Vinnie, possibly Grace and other leaders. We would visit Sipi Falls and a lovely place on Mt. Elgon In the evening we shall be in praise and prayer time at Bethel. People come for prayer, healings occur during that time.
10	Thursday	Join with Bethel members building a mud house for someone in the community. Evening Bible study at Bethel
11	Friday	An easy day. Time to prepare sermons or prepare for Day Of Service
12	Saturday	Visit the Children's ministry (over 400 kids) in the morning. Cultural event in afternoon.
13	Sunday	Team splits for church at several satellite churches.
14	Monday	A Day In The Life: individually or in pairs spend half a day with Bethel member or family. Dinner with Bethel leaders at Vinnie and Grace's home. Team to prepare food under Grace's supervision
15	Tuesday	Travel to see more of the Bethel churches across the mountain and see the community projects up there (eg. goats, coffee, water).
16	Wednesday	An easy day.
17	Thursday	A Day Of Service: use your knowledge, talents or body to help make a difference.
18	Friday	To be decided
19	Saturday	Free time for shopping, packing, time with leaders or new friends. Farewell dinner.
20	Sunday	Church at Bethel. Depart after church for Safari. (Or stay in Mbale until Wednesday.)
21	Mon - Wed	Safari at Murchison Falls National Park for 3 days. Return to Kampala
24	Thursday	Markets in morning. Fly home in afternoon
25	Friday	Arrive Melbourne about 9:30pm. Home

- **Safari (see Appendix 1 for more information)**
 - The planned Safari is at Murchison Falls in NW Uganda with Red Chilli guides and accommodation is in cabins (not in tents).
 - The Safari company have other exotic safari activities in the same park which you may consider.
 - **Please be very aware** that the Murchison Falls area is often subject of an Australian Government Travel Advisory. The safari is still considered very safe by our contacts in Uganda, but we will continue to monitor this.
 - While we view the safari as an unofficial extension to the Exposure Trip, we may still be required or obliged to change our plans and go on a different safari.

6 Accommodation

- First night in Uganda is at Guest House in Jinja (“Kingfisher Safari Resort”) if driving all the way to Mbale, OR at a Guest House near Kampala Entebbe Airport if flying with MAF to Tororo.
- Vinnie & Grace’s home in Mbale. Upstairs is set up for visitors with multiple twin-share rooms, each with an en suite.
- You may need to share a room with another team member, depending on the size of the group.
- If the group outgrows Vinnie’s home, some will stay with Andrew & Sarah, or Aaron & Jennifer
- On Safari, accommodation is in banda huts (bungalows) with own bedrooms and bathroom
- Last night: is likely at Red Chilli Guesthouse in Kampala (then shopping at the markets in the morning)

7 Medical

- There are various diseases common in Uganda. You should have vaccinations and take precautions to reduce the risk to you. Diseases include: hepatitis A & B, malaria, yellow fever, cholera, dengue fever, typhoid, rabies, polio, meningitis, meningococcal and AIDS
- You will receive a proposed list and schedule of vaccinations, some of which are due to be started soon. Will include yellow fever, typhoid, hepatitis A, and boosters for tetanus and diphtheria if due. Malaria is a definite risk.
- Please ensure all your normal immunisations are up to date (eg. tetanus). You should consider flu vaccination too
- If you organise your own travel insurance (eg. 1Cover), make sure you have very good health insurance. Be well-covered, just in case things go very wrong. We are investigating the use of New Pen’s insurance (with BUUV).
- We hope to have a doctor as part of the team but this is not definite yet. If not, is anyone a First Aid person?
- Food and drinks should be safe to eat if cooked by a trusted person, but hand hygiene is **very** important and avoid sharing food! It will be a change from your normal diet and it may take several days for your body to adapt.
- Jetlag is often a problem at both ends of the trip, seemingly more of a problem when you return home.

8 Costing

- A quick and typical estimate is \$2900 for flights, \$800 for costs in Australia, \$1500 for costs in Uganda.
- Australian costs include passport, birth certificate, immunisations and insurance: you may have them sorted already.
- Immunisations include: yellow fever (\$150), hep A, polio, tetanus, diphtheria. Malaria tablets also required
- Ugandan costs are based on experience and include the safari, spending money, plus gifts / support / donations.
- The Uganda trip returns just before end of term school holidays. You might want to return home via other countries.
- Some people might choose to skip the 3-day Safari to cut costs and save themselves \$580.
- Most costs are simply to get you there and back - the essential “in country” costs are very low.
- Most people will end up wanting to make generous donations to help people or ministries at Bethel.
- This costing uses our current best estimates and is supported by people in Uganda, but please take these costs as rough estimates, and perhaps see them as the minimum cost and plan to access more.

KEY ESTIMATED COSTS	Cost \$	Comments
Flights	2900	Etihad or Emirates – depends on dates & deals
Insurance	230	1Cover Worldwide Comprehensive plan age 50
Vaccinations	400	Travel doctor fees + Vaccinations + medical kit
Passport and photos	400	\$325 + \$20 (Post Office photos) + \$54 birth cert
Uganda visa	75	\$50US
Return Transport from airport to Mbale	130	\$800 for whole team
Jinja guesthouse (first night)	60	
Accommodation Mbale	180	At Vinnie and Grace’s home
Daily Food	240	\$5-\$10 per meal, \$20 daily
3 day Safari Tour, accom and transport	580	Red Chilli Murchison Falls Safari: food is extra
Kampala guesthouse after Safari (last night)	40	
Money to pay for building a mud house	150	Optional. Total group cost is \$1300
“When Helping Hurts” book	20	Recommended reading as Preparation
OTHER ITEMS (UNCOSTED)		
Contribution to other team expenses (eg. petrol costs if much mileage covered during trip)		
Compensation for Bethel helpers and hosts to cover their expenses or time taken from work		
Personal spending money (eg. mobile airtime credit, snacks, toiletries, souvenirs and gifts)		
Personal giving as you feel led to individuals / ministry / church / Jenga projects / etc		

9 Fundraising

- While you may fully fund your own trip, we recommend considering fund-raising a reasonable proportion of the total.
- Reasons: Fundraising forces you to think through your motives and your hopes for the trip, it gives you a chance to witness and get others thinking, and it gives you extra accountability and deeper support and interest from your friends and family. It allows others to bless you and be a part of the experience, and it gets you praying and looking for God to “come through” for you. It also helps you learn/improve humility and openness, and it prepares you for the high level of generosity and hospitality you will experience in Uganda. These are all benefits and preparation that you should try not to miss out on!
- Personal fundraising is the personal responsibility of each person on the team, not the team.
- The team and UPG will help you get going (and keep going!) with your own fundraising and can also organise and promote larger fundraising events if you wish. (We have not scheduled any team fund-raising events at this stage.)

10 Cultural Issues

- This is a very cross-cultural trip! Ugandan culture, lifestyle and standard of living is very different to ours. You will learn much about their culture and much about your culture!
- There are many ways that we can inadvertently or carelessly offend people, be too helpful or too generous, appear superior or conceited or disrespectful, become too close, display physical affection across genders, or give other negative impressions and in these ways be bad representatives for God and the church.
- You will receive clear rules and guidelines governing dress, behaviour, giving gifts, interactions with locals and amongst the team, and more. These have been developed jointly by Bethel and New Peninsula.
- You need to be prepared and trained before arriving, so that you avoid making major mistakes and offending people, you handle the “shock” well, and you are able to see through the cultural differences to understand what is going on and communicate well. Training sessions will help you see through the cultural differences to understand what is going on, and will assist you with clear communication.

11 Personal and team preparation

- In order to maximise our interactions during the visit and to grow as disciples, anyone proposing to be included in this visit will be required to participate in personal and team preparation. Examples of what this will include are:
 - Basic knowledge of Bethel history - read the Bethel Photo Book that records the early history of Bethel
 - Improve your Cultural Intelligence - read the book “When Helping Hurts” (available from church bookstore)
 - Attend Pre Visit Training Workshops and team building events
 - Analyse yourself – Why are you going? What are your weaknesses and strengths, hopes and concerns? What do you need to think and pray through beforehand? Set personal goals.
 - Establish your own support base - a few committed prayer buddies, someone to keep you accountable.
 - Participate in journaling: Everyone will maintain a daily journal on the trip. (You should even start now!) This will help you work through your thoughts and personal issues, experiences and cultural issues, and record the remarkable ways that you experience God working. It is helpful for short-term counselling and debriefing, and for personal reflection in the future.
 - Be prepared for life in Uganda - maximise your fitness, try new foods, get out of your cultural comfort zone
 - Ensure adequate personal awareness of Health and Safety, including visits to the Travel Doctor
- There will be training days before the trip, times to talk through issues with the team or one-to-one during the trip, team debriefing at the end of the trip, and individual follow-up after returning home.
- After returning home there is a definite expectation that you will participate in debriefing / counselling sessions, share your experiences at church (up front and privately), hopefully maintain active involvement in the Bethel partnership.

INFORMATION you will receive at the Pre Visit Training Workshops should include (but is not limited to):

1. Introduction to Uganda: History, economy, politics, typical life experience, etc
2. Living and working in Mbale: Local areas, getting around, electricity, mobile phones, internet, etc
3. Cultural Issues: Greetings, dress, hospitality, eye & physical contact, time, food, safety, giving gifts and aid, attitudes to foreigners, etc
4. Preparations for going to Uganda: Flights, visa, insurance, money, security, documentation required, etc
5. Health considerations: Common health problems, essential medical items, useful items to bring, toiletries, clothes, donated goods
6. Updated summary of costs

SAFARI

Red Chilli tours: **US\$335 + \$20 (Mbale pickup) + \$40 (banda accom) + \$15 (airport transfer) per person.**

The Red Chilli Murchison Falls Trip is widely touted as **the best value safari tour in East Africa** – perfect if you are on a tight budget but still want to enjoy the big game experience. The \$375 trip is inclusive of all park entrance fees and activities, **2 nights accommodation** (we always **upgrade** from tents to bandas with own bathrooms), all transport to the safari (\$20 to pickup from Mbale, which saves a day travelling to Kamplala beforehand) and returning to Kampala (plus \$15 for transport to airport). Meals, drinks, tips and personal items are NOT included. They have a fully stocked restaurant and bar at the Rest Camp with main meals around \$5. The itinerary of their standard trip is detailed below, **however** we would swap Day 1 and Day 3 activities:

Day 1. 7.30 a.m. Depart Red Chilli Kampala on one of our 8-seater customized safari minibuses. Take lunch in Masindi before heading into the park

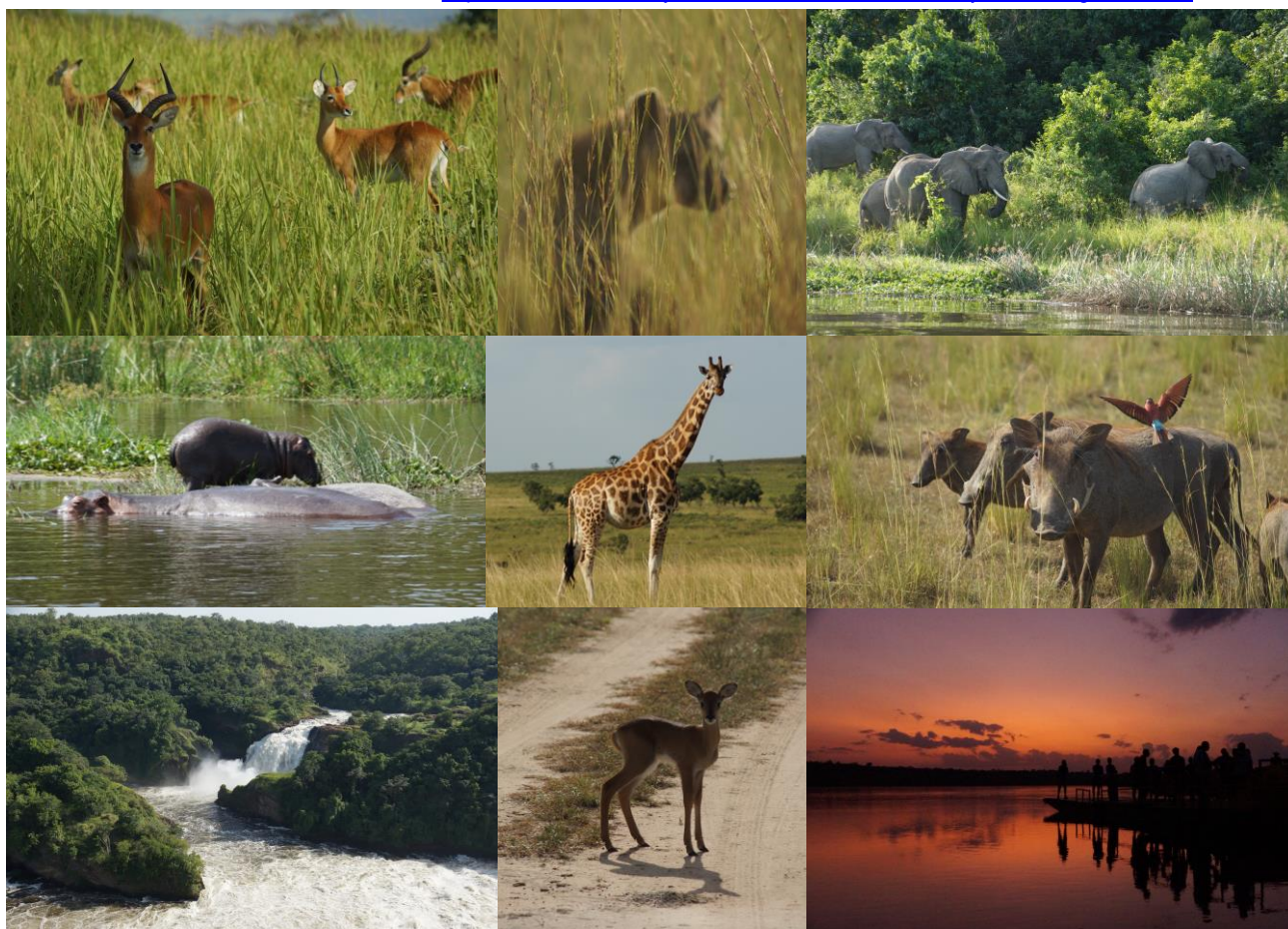
2:00 pm Depart to the **top of the Falls** for a guided walk around the cliffs and right up to the edge of the Falls themselves. Proceed to the Red Chilli Rest Camp for sundowners and a meal before settling in for the night.

Day 2. 6.45 a.m. Depart Red Chilli Rest Camp in your minibus and cross the Nile for a **4 hour game drive** around the Nile Delta area of the park. This is where most big game gathers and where there are spectacular views across Lake Albert towards the Blue Mountains of the Congo and northern Uganda. There is a very high chance of seeing lion, buffalo, elephant, giraffe as well as many types of antelope and varied bird life. You might even get lucky and spot a leopard. Head back to Red Chilli for a relaxing lunch.

2.15 p.m. Depart for a 3 hour afternoon **boat launch** trip up-stream towards the base of Murchison Falls. Hippos, huge Nile crocodiles, more buffalo, antelope and fantastically varied bird life abound. You might also see elephants drinking at the water's edge. Followed by a second night spent enjoying our hospitality and sitting around the campfire.

Day 3. 8.30 a.m. Depart for 2 hour game drive then exit park via Karuma Falls with a short walk and relaxed picnic lunch. Arrive back in Kampala between 5:00 – 7:30 pm, traffic and weather permitting.

See the website for more details: <https://redchillihideaway.com/tour/murchison-falls-3-day-falls-and-game-safari>



Animals seen by the Exposure Trip teams on the Murchison Falls Safaris:

Lion, giraffe, hippo, crocodile, elephant, hyena, warthog, water buffalo, monkeys, deer, antelopes and birds.