

A visit to Teso offers you a fascinating and varied range of activities and experiences that give you a unique insight into the ingenuity, challenges and way of life of the Iteso people living in the heart of Africa.

Your presence and interest in them is much appreciated, especially if you show respect for their culture and are sensitive to differences between your culture and theirs. Showing interest in them and being willing to learn from them will encourage them to realize that there are many aspects of their culture, skills and knowledge that are important and therefore important to keep comprehensive as they work to develop their when manners in an appropriate and sustainable manner. They will also benefit from learning about your way of life and culture - it is a reciprocal interaction.

1. Home life and cultural experiences:

- Stay overnight with a family in your own grass-thatched house (hut/banda)
- Participate in agricultural activities (eg: cultivation of different crops and harvesting)
- Ploughing with oxen (in the wet season)
- Participate in processing, preparing and cooking local food
- Process groundnuts to make your own peanut butter
- Take animals out to graze
- Fetch water from a borehole or spring
- Story-telling
- Traditional dancing
- Singing and music played on traditional instruments
- Visit a herbal medicine practitioner to learn about the plants they use to treat various sicknesses

2. Walks, hikes and cycling (anything from 1 hour to two days long):

- See ancient rock paintings at Kapir or Nyero
- Walk up Kapir Hill or Soroti Rock for stunning views of Teso and beyond
- Rock scrambling (Kapir, Soroti or Ngora)
- Agricultural tour to learn about crops including cultivation, harvesting and processing
- Tour of villages around Lake Semere

3. Water activities:

- Fishing with local fishermen, using a variety of methods (half or whole day)
- Boat trips on one of the lakes and through grassy swamps (half/whole day or overnight)
- Boat trip to look for the rare Shoebill, the endemic Fox's Weaver and many

- other birds
- Canoeing in local canoes

4. **Community activities:**

- Visit a primary school
- Play football with young people
- Attend a church service (Sundays)
- Go round a weekly village market or a daily town market

SOME NOTES ABOUT WHAT TO EXPECT AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

We hope this information will help you and your hosts in Teso to understand each other better and to feel more comfortable with each other when you first meet. If ever you are in doubt, or have questions, please don't hesitate to ask your driver/guide.

1. Ugandans are always very welcoming and friendly, but also quite formal. They will always shake hands, on meeting and departure, first thing in the morning etc. At the same time, ask how they are.
2. Asking how someone is *before* going on to talk about anything else is important, even if it is a stranger or you have stopped someone to ask the way or gone into a shop to buy something.
3. Women and girls usually kneel to greet you, or perhaps curtsy if you are standing.
4. If visiting a family, you will be welcomed with handshakes by everyone, including small children. You will then be asked to sit down and the whole extended family will come again and be formally introduced and shake hands again. On a first visit, there may be formal speeches of welcome, introductions and thanks.
5. Being more formal, Ugandans use names and titles differently. Children and young people never use adults' first names. "Old Man" or "Mzee" is a term of great respect and not abuse! If you are a woman over about 60, you are likely to be called Mama or Mum (Amojong or Toto) by many people. This is out of respect and is normal, although some people find it hard to accept!
6. At birth, children are given a vernacular name. Christians are also given a Christian name at baptism, which is put after their vernacular name. They don't have surnames. The equivalent to our surnames is actually the clan name, which they know but don't use. Children are more often called by their vernacular names and adults by their Christian names.

Relationships

1. Please be careful not to break down or flaunt Ugandan ways of relating. Problems have been inadvertently caused by volunteers and visitors not understanding the differences.

2. Children have a very respectful, 'distant' relationship with adults and often appear very shy, especially girls. They are always well-behaved. Adults don't play with children as they do in Europe. Children give a lot of help in the home, even from the age of 4 or 5. Boys and girls may have different roles and responsibilities although both will look after babies and toddlers. They are very rarely disobedient or rude, naughty or quarrelsome. Children (especially very young ones and the last born) have a special place in the home and society.
3. It is best not to give gifts or money to people without first consulting. Please don't give children sweets as they have no access to dental treatment.
4. Husbands and wives (boy-friends/girl-friends) never display affection or physical contact, even in the home. If you are in Teso with your spouse/partner or boyfriend/girlfriend, be very sensitive about this. Please do not hold hands or kiss or cuddle in public. It is important you respect their culture and don't set what could be seen as a bad example to young people by relating inappropriately. If you are young and single, please be very careful how you relate to young people of the opposite gender whom you meet in Teso. They do not normally relate in the very open and physically intimate way that we often do in Europe, but are reserved and distant. Be careful not to "lead them on" or encourage unrealistic expectations of your friendship. Be aware that you might not think you are leading them on! It is not acceptable to flirt or get too familiar, as many younger people do when on holiday in Europe. If a boy takes a girl home to meet his family, it means that they are intending to get married, so do not accept such an invitation if you are a young woman. Although it is not acceptable for husbands and wives, or boys and girls, to hold hands or display affection when walking or sitting or talking, it is actually common for two men to hold hands and even show 'brotherly' affection.
5. Homosexuality is not only totally unacceptable anywhere in Uganda, it is actually illegal. People may ask you what you think and what happens in Europe. If you are gay or lesbian, keep this to yourself, for your own sake as well as out of tactfulness for their culture and laws. If you do not feel able to hide the fact, then perhaps you will want to reconsider visiting Uganda until things have changed.

Food and meals

1. The day starts very early for Ugandans, before dawn. However, guests are usually given breakfast between about 8.00 and 9.00. It may consist of one or more of:- 'porridge' (posho made of maize flour, or millet flour); hard boiled eggs; bread (with or without Blue Band margarine); roasted groundnuts; fruit; fried matooke or katogo (green savoury bananas) or cassava or sweet potatoes; tea and coffee.
2. Lunch and supper (dinner) are usually about 1.00-2.00 and 8.00-9.00 respectively. The food is similar at both meals and will include staple carbohydrates such as rice, sweet potatoes, 'Irish' potatoes, matooke (peeled green bananas, boiled and mashed), thick posho (maize flour),

atap (a solid mixture of millet flour and cassava flour) plus some protein eg: meat (= beef), chicken, fish, pork or goat, groundnut (peanut) sauce, various beans, peas or lentils. There is not a wide variety of green vegetables. They don't have sweets or puddings, but you may be given fresh fruit (usually bananas) afterwards.

3. You may be offered 'sodas' (fizzy drinks) or tea at any other time. This is often accompanied by roast groundnuts or possibly one of the following:- hard boiled eggs, small bananas, bread, mandazis (little fried 'cakes' a bit like doughnuts) or plain biscuits. Milk is always boiled, and served hot with tea. Tea is traditionally made by boiling water and milk (50/50) with tea leaves and sugar, but is now often served with milk and tea separately in thermos flasks. You should always drink bottled water.
4. Because there is no running water, a bowl, piece of soap and a jug of water will be brought round by someone in the family to each person immediately before and after each meal or cup of tea so that you can wash your hands. The water will be poured for you in small amounts. It is customary to cup your right hand in your left hand, holding as much water as possible with which to wash your hands. As the water is very soft, don't rub on too much soap as you won't be able to wash it all off! If your mouth is greasy, it is acceptable to wash it with your right hand whilst washing your hands. If you are with a Christian family, they will usually give thanks and pray for the meal to be blessed before you help yourself to food.
5. It is normal to be invited to serve yourself to food. If you are not sure about the food, it is advisable to take only a little at first, so that you don't end up leaving anything. Meat can be tough. You will be expected to help yourself to second helpings if you want to. Most Ugandans eat 'on their laps', not at a table, and don't normally use cutlery although guests will be given cutlery. If you want to eat with your hand, as they do, you need to eat with your right hand (the left hand is traditionally used for the toilet) and hold your plate with your left hand. It is quite a skill to eat sauces or gravy and rice with one hand! Watch how they do it. It is normal for the women and children of the family to eat outside, separately.
6. Alcohol is such a problem in Uganda that no protestant Christian will drink alcohol. However, some families may offer you traditional 'beer' which is usually made by fermenting germinated millet or sorghum. It is usually served in a very large earthenware pot which everyone sits around in a circle and drinks from. As it has a lot of sediment, each person is given a very long 'straw' which has an intricately made little filter on the end. Be aware that there is no way of measuring or assessing the alcohol content which can be much stronger than you think!
- 7.

Washing, bathrooms and toilets

1. There is no running water in rural homes, so try not to be wasteful of water - remember that every drop has to be carried (usually by the children and women, unless the family has a bicycle, in which case teenage boys and men may fetch water on their bicycle).

2. The water is very soft, so use very little soap / shampoo / washing powder, otherwise you will never rinse it out! If you are staying, you will be invited to "bathe" before breakfast and in the evening. You will be given a large round plastic bowl, a jerrycan of water and a pair of 'flip-flops' ("slippers"). If you would like to bathe in warm water, you can ask for some hot water as well. Stand outside the bowl and scoop water over yourself. Rinse outside the bowl so that the water in the bowl remains clean and soap-free. This is especially important if washing your hair. You may find it helpful to have a plastic cup. If you want to wash any clothes, it can be done in the water left over from bathing. Please be very discreet about underwear. These are considered such personal items that they are never seen lying about or hung on a line outside, nor will anyone wash someone else's underwear. So wash your own, even if someone washes your other clothes for you, and hang them discreetly in your bedroom.
3. When visiting people in the villages, you will find toilets are pit latrines set a little way from the house and compound. There is normally a small rectangular or oval hole in the ground which you squat over (not easy if you suffer from arthritis or back problems). Using these toilets without leaving drops etc is quite a skill! Beware of dropping things like mobile phones or wallets down the hole out of your pockets (it happens!). You may sometimes experience flies during the day and perhaps cockroaches at night. But they won't do you any harm! There will be water and soap for washing your hands afterwards. The Ugandan way of asking to go to the toilet is "Can I help myself" or "Where can I ease myself". The word "toilet" is not usually used.

Language

1. It is very much appreciated if you try to master a few basic words of greetings ("yoga") and thanks ("eyalama").
2. English is the common language throughout Uganda. It is taught from the beginning of primary school. Those who have been to secondary school speak very good English although they may struggle more with writing English. However, the Ugandan English accent is very different from a British English accent. They find US accents even harder to understand. This means that Ugandans can find it very hard to understand visitors. So please speak slowly and carefully, avoiding slang and idioms which they won't understand. If someone hasn't understood, say it again in a different way. Likewise, you may find it very hard at first to understand their accent!
3. There is no word for "please" in Ugandan languages. It is important to remember this as it means that Ugandans do not automatically use "please" in English and so can often appear brusque or even rude when asking for something. Don't be surprised if they just say what feels like a blunt "yes" or "no" instead of "yes please" or "no thank you".
4. Whereas UK English has changed a lot in the last one hundred years, Ugandan English is still quite 'old-fashioned' and they often use words and phrases differently. If you look them up in the dictionary, you will find that

their use or meaning of a word is often one of the older definitions. This can lead to misunderstandings. For instance, an 'orphan' to a Ugandan means a child who has lost either one or both parents (which is technically quite correct), whereas Europeans assume an orphan has lost both parents. Being called a "total orphan" means they have lost both parents.

What to wear

1. It can get chilly in the evenings, especially during the rainy season, so take something warm, as well as a waterproof jacket. An umbrella is very useful not only when it is raining, but also if you are walking in the hot sun. Sandals are fine although trainers or sports shoes are better if you are walking around the villages and fields.
2. It is not appropriate to wear anything too 'revealing' such as narrow straps and low neck lines, very short skirts or shorts or long slits in skirts. Women in rural communities don't wear trousers.

If you feel the need to get out, there're a number of options. If you need more than a Bodaboda to get somewhere, you can ask the administration at the hospital to organize you a driver, the driver will cost approx. Ush 1500 per kilometer driven – but it's expensive, usually a cheaper option is to just take public transport.

Kumi Town– easy to get to, get a Bodaboda from outside the hospital gates to Kumi Town for one person the fee is Ush 2000 , for shared Bodaboda the fee is Ush 1500 per individual, and likely getting back to Kumi Hospital you can still use a Bodaboda either Shared or not the choice is yours.

Places within reach for a weekend trip include:

1. Lake Bisina – it's not quite along way to travel but worth it for a weekend. Very relaxing and very beautiful, it's where Kumi Hospital pumps it water from.
2. Nyero Rock Paintings
3. Sipi Falls- it's located on the Slopes of Ssebi Mountains

Other places to visit are more local and ask people at the hospital for details on how to get there.

Ongino Market – happens every Friday starting at around 8:00am.

Great for food, clothes and fabric for taking to the tailors.

Worth going after 5pm because of the oppressive heat!

You'll be able to see the path going to Ongino from the number of people walking up and down it from the main road in Kumi.

Odelo Market – happens usually on Saturday starting at 09:00am, it's known for fresh foods There are plenty of other things to do, this is just a taster.