

## ***Frequently Asked Questions***

### **What type of climate does Uganda have?**

Although it is near the equator, the high altitude of Buseesa results in a pleasant climate, with temperatures usually in the 70 degree Fahrenheit (24 degree Celsius) range. Dry and rainy seasons alternate twice yearly. The dry brings dust and the possibility of water shortage. The rainy brings mud and frequent soakings. Sunny, beautiful weather is the rule, even in the rainy season when the daily rains typically occur in late afternoon and evening. Mpala is generally warmer and more humid.

### **What languages are spoken?**

English is the official language of Uganda and classes are taught in English. All the sisters, teachers, and students speak English, but the adult villagers generally do not. Since Uganda was once a protectorate of Great Britain, British English is the rule. The local language in Buseesa is Runyoro, a Bantu dialect. It is spoken only in a relatively small area around Buseesa. More adults use English in Mpala.

### **What are accommodations like?**

Volunteers will live mainly in teacher housing. This is a two-story brick building that is part of St. Julie Mission in Buseesa. The rooms have cement floors and simple furnishings, including comfortable beds and a sink with running water. The common baths include flush toilets and showers. Only cold water is available. Laundry is done by hand.

### **What foods are available?**

Carbohydrates are the basis of the Ugandan diet. At St. Julie's in Buseesa volunteers are always able to eat meals served in the dining hall. Everyone living on site has lunch there. The breakfast provided at the dining hall is generally bread and tea. Posho (boiled maize) or boiled and mashed cassava is frequently served for lunch. This is covered with a "sauce" of cooked beans. Rice, matoke (boiled plantain bananas), spaghetti and potatoes are also served, again with bean or g-nut (peanut) sauce. Dinner almost always consists of posho and beans. Meat is eaten mostly on special days of celebration. Only treated water can be drunk.

Generally once or twice a week, volunteers are invited to meals in the convent where a mix of Western and Ugandan fare is prepared. Facilities for volunteers to prepare simple meals for themselves are available.

In Mpala, mostly Ugandan food is prepared, usually by a Ugandan cook.

### **What kind of travel is involved in reaching the mission?**

Lots of flying is required to come to Uganda. From the United States, the following is typical. First, a flight, perhaps of several hours, to an International Airport. This is followed by an eight to ten hour flight to Europe (usually London or Amsterdam). Then, another eight to ten hour flight to Entebbe, Uganda. Mpala is located about half an hour from the Entebbe airport. A three to four hour drive is required to reach Buseesa.

**What is travel within Uganda like?**

Walking is the most common means of transportation! Paths are pot-holed and uneven. Public transport exists in the form of taxis (minivans) that operate without published schedules and which are often very packed with people and cargo. For longer business trips, the sisters' Land Cruiser or truck is used. Usually an experienced Ugandan driver is employed, since negotiating most of the roads is quite a challenge. The frequency and extent of trips is determined by current circumstances and need.

If a volunteer wishes to do sight-seeing, she must make her own arrangements to engage in this as duties permit. Sometimes a vehicle and driver can be hired. The sisters will be glad to advise, but will not be responsible for making arrangements.

**What formal spiritual opportunities are available?**

In Buseesa, Mass or a Communion Service is celebrated in the convent every day. The frequency of the Eucharistic Liturgy varies with the availability of the clergy. The sisters pray morning and evening prayers together in the convent chapel. Volunteers are welcome to participate in any or all of these services.

Usually on Sundays, a parish mass and a student mass are held at the nearby church. Volunteers are expected to attend. The liturgies are spirited, with much music and singing, and typically last from one-and-a-half to three hours. Seating is on backless benches in a crowded space.

**What means of communication exist?**

Newspapers or magazines are available to those in Buseesa only when purchased in Kampala. Volunteers generally bring mobile phones. Several locations on the property have network coverage. Mail is slow and is delivered at the postoffice in Mubende, an hour's drive away. Several computers in the convent allow for limited internet access, making email possible. Internet service is very expensive so that calling up or sending pictures or video needs to be avoided. These limitations are not as pronounced at Mpala which is near the cities of Kampala and Entebbe.

**Who will be living at the convents?**

Usually Sisters from the California and Covington provinces in the U.S.A., from Germany, and from Uganda live at St. Julie in Buseesa or Mpala. The number at each site fluctuates with circumstances, but is likely to be from five to twelve.

**What type of clothing is appropriate for living in Uganda?**

Women in Buseesa are expected to wear skirts that are not too tightly-fitting (pants are beginning to appear in Kampala). Most volunteers wear simple warm-weather shirts and skirts. Sturdy sandals that can withstand getting wet are practical footwear. For more formal occasions, closed shoes are appropriate. Nights are surprisingly cool, so a sweater or jacket is advisable. A waterproof jacket with hood and/or an umbrella is recommended for the rainy season.

**What does one do for recreation?**

Typically in the evening, volunteers gather for music, card playing or other games. Volunteers often join the students for soccer games on the large field between the dining hall and teacher housing. Reading is a great pastime and a good number of books are available (a book light is recommended, though). One can walk or hike during daylight hours. Occasional trips to nearby towns or Kampala can be arranged.

### **What kind of medical facilities exist in Buseesa? in Mpala?**

There are no nearby doctors, dentists or hospitals in Buseesa. The closest access is in Kampala, a 3-4 hour drive away. Sr. Mary Delrita, a registered nurse, can attend to ordinary illnesses or emergencies. Mpala, being near Kampala, is in much closer proximity to medical services.

### **What jobs do volunteers do?**

The following are possibilities at St. Julie's: cooking, gardening, teaching, operating the canteen, assisting in the library and/or computer lab, assisting with studyhalls, computer skills, tutoring, assisting in sick bay, helping matrons in the dorms. There may also be opportunities to work at nearby clinics, at a nearby secondary school and to visit village homes. Buseesa is a busy place with lots of opportunities for service. Of course, any relevant gifts a volunteer brings will be put to good use.

### **Is Uganda safe?**

The most publicized violence in Uganda has been in the north, and there has been no significant rebel activity there for some years now. The people are recovering from years of displacement in camps. This region is hours away from Kampala and very remote from Buseesa. Bombings on July 11, 2010 during the World Cup soccer games were widely publicized and led to warnings to avoid large public gatherings. No further incidents occurred. Political demonstrations occasionally occur in Kampala and sometimes result in violent acts.

White persons are presumed to have money and are inviting targets for thieves who are generally interested only in the money. Up-to-date information about safety can be obtained from [kampala.usembassy.gov](http://kampala.usembassy.gov) or [travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov) in the United States. Once in Uganda, a volunteer can register with the U.S. embassy and email alerts will be sent.

### **What kind of immunizations and medicines are required?**

Documentation for immunization against yellow fever is required for entering Uganda. Other recommendations, especially regarding malaria medications, should be sought from a medical service specializing in international medicine. Malaria is widespread in Uganda especially in Mpala which has many mosquitoes because of its proximity to Lake Victoria.

### **What special items should a volunteer bring with her?**

In addition to the usual travel items, the following are necessary: flashlight, candles, battery-powered alarm clock, mobile phone, battery-powered electronic equipment for your own diversion, recharger and extra batteries, small light source for keychain, umbrella or hooded raincoat, sturdy sandals, closed shoes. If you choose to bring a laptop, keep in mind that securing such items requires extra vigilance.

**What kinds of animals are likely to be encountered?**

In Buseesa, a large farm with pigs, goats, rabbits and chickens in addition to various crops adjoins the school property. It is necessary to walk through space where goats and rabbits are on free range. The local wildlife includes monkeys, bats, lizards, insects and an occasional snake. Monkeys, bats, lizards of various sizes, snakes and insects are present at the Mpala property.