

National Day of Uganda

PUBLICITY

'Pearl of Africa' rich in unique nature, culture

By Kaahwa Tophace
Ambassador of Uganda

Uganda will celebrate her 61st independence anniversary on Oct. 9. This year's anniversary will also mark 61 years since Uganda established diplomatic relations with Japan. Having lived in Japan for slightly over a year now, I have had the opportunity to interact with many Japanese citizens and in the process began to learn the way of life of this Land of the Rising Sun. A nation's strength lies not just in its economy, but also in its people. My desire is to introduce you to Uganda, its people and its unique culture in order to strengthen the relations between Uganda and Japan.



Kaahwa Tophace

Is Uganda similar to Japan?

What do you know about Uganda? The Republic of Uganda is located in East Africa with a population of 45 million people. Also known as the Pearl of Africa, Uganda is blessed with a tropical climate and features only two seasons: wet and dry. Although Uganda does not experience a winter season, snow can be found on Mt. Rwenzori in the west of Uganda, also known as Mountains of the Moon because of the snow-capped peaks. The breathtaking beauty of Mt. Rwenzori owes its allure to the diverse scenery from the base of the mountain characterized by grassland, rich, moist, dense forests, bamboo, colored moss, huge tree heather, lakes, glaciers and waterfalls, all the way to the peak. You get

to experience all of this beauty a fairly short distance north of the Equator.

For lovers of mountain climbing, nature hikes and trails, birdwatching, (regarded as an Important Birding Area with 217 known bird species), wildlife, botany, the location of the Mountains of the Moon within Mt. Rwenzori National Park, a certified UNESCO World Heritage site, ensures that a visit to this area will be well worth it! Did you know that Mt. Rwenzori is not a volcanic mountain? Like Japan, Uganda values its diverse traditions and cultures which are largely responsible for our identity, who we are. The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda recognizes 65 tribes which are key in identification of an individual's ancestry or background. Naming of children follows a patrilineal pattern and names have meaning and significance.

However, unlike Japan, Uganda does not have one major language. While English and more recently Swahili, are the official languages, several other native dialects are spoken. These include but are not limited to: Luganda, runyankole, rutoro, runyoro, rukiga, acholi, lusoga, ateso, lugbara.



Left: The crested crane is Uganda's national bird. Right: The Murchison Falls is one of the most visited tourist destinations in Uganda.

As is the case with Japan, food in Uganda is highly valued. While matooke (green cooking bananas that are popularly steamed in banana leaves) is the staple food of Uganda, other popular foods include ugali made from maize flour, sweet potatoes, cassava, yams, pumpkin, millet, a brown flour that can be made into porridge or a main meal. When you visit Uganda, do not exit its borders without tasting gonja (yellow plantain), a well-loved delicacy that is eaten roasted, steamed and deep-fried. A typical mouthwatering Ugandan meal would be incomplete without beans, peas, groundnut stew, chicken, beef, goat, freshwater fish or sun-dried fish. Traditionally, this protein-rich stew (except for beans and peas) is placed in banana leaves and steamed until tender ensuring that the flavors are rich when the meal is served. When a meal is cooked in banana leaves, it is commonly referred to as oluwombo/luwombo. While in times past, serving luwombo was preserved for special occasions, in contemporary times one can easily obtain luwombo every day of the week from many restaurants across the country. Popular vegetables in a typical Ugandan meal may include doodo (amaranth), nakati,



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spinach, ntula (garden eggs), cabbage, bbuga (red amaranth), jjobyo (spider plant), katunkuma and eggplants. Uganda being an agricultural country, the bulk of the food is domestically grown and sourced.

A visit to the different regions of Uganda will reveal an assortment of traditional dress. However, men traditionally don the kanzu, a long white tunic while women commonly wear don the gomesi or busuuti and umushanana.

For the fashion and textile lovers here in Japan, you will be pleasantly

surprised to know that the origins of the wildly popular eco-friendly bark cloth, locally known as olubugo, can be traced back to Buganda Kingdom, an ancient kingdom in Uganda where bark cloth production featured heavily. This cloth is obtained from the tree bark of the mtuba (ficus natalensis) tree.

Uganda's culture is enriched by its captivating music and dance heritage drawn from the five regions of Uganda, with a song and a dance for every occasion.

Football and athletics are extreme-

ly popular sports in Uganda and are part of a normal child's play on the average school playground.

As Ambassador of the Republic of Uganda to Japan, I take this opportunity to invite you to Explore the Pearl of Africa at leisure. Beyond the incredible wildlife, flora and fauna, consider a home-stay visit and include it in your itinerary in order to experience a day in the life of an ordinary Ugandan and better appreciate Ugandan culture.

Happy Independence Celebrations to every Ugandan citizen!

CONGRATULATIONS
to the People of the Republic of Uganda
on the 61st Anniversary of Their Independence



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Izumisano City and Gulu City in the Republic of Uganda signed a Friendship City Agreement on the 18th of July, 2017 for friendship and mutual development and have since carried out a variety of exchange activities.



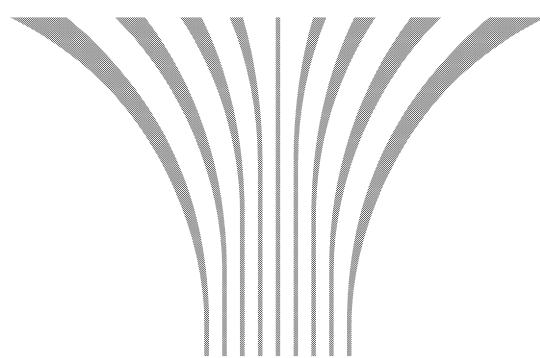
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