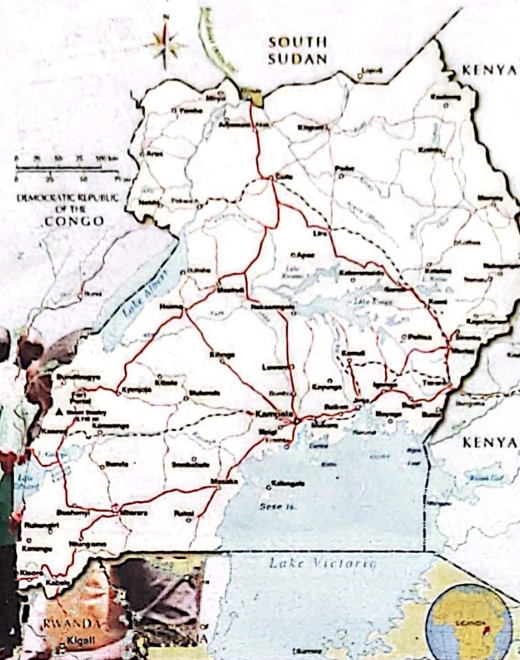


Transport fares hiked ahead of Christmas

NEW RATES

Hiked. A graphic illustration of transport fares to different up-country routes.



ROUTE	NEW FARE	OLD FARE
Kampala-Fort-Portal	Shs35,000	Shs25,000
Kampala-Bundibugyo	Shs45,000	Shs30,000
Kampala-Kasese	Shs45,000	Shs30,000
Kampala-Mbarara	Shs25,000	Shs15,000
Kampala-Ntungamo	Shs40,000	Shs20,000
Kampala-Rukungiri	Shs25,000	Shs20,000
Kampala-Kitgum	Shs35,000	Shs25,000
Kampala-Mbale	Shs25,000	Shs20,000
Kampala-Soroti	Shs30,000	Shs25,000
Kampala-Moroto	Shs60,000	Shs40,000
Kampala-Kaabong	Shs80,000	Shs47,000
Kampala-Nakapiripirit	Shs65,000	Shs35,000
Kampala to Amudat	Shs65,000	Shs35,000
Moroto-Mbale via Nakapiripirit	Shs35,000	Shs25,000
Moroto-Soroti	Shs25,000	Shs20,000

GRAPHIC: MIKE LOUBOYERA MUSAASI

Travel chaos. Travellers from Kampala to different parts of the country forced to pay almost double the fare.

BY AMOS NGWOMOYA & STEVEN ARIONG
editorial@ug.nationmedia.com

KAMPALA. With three days left to celebrate Christmas, transport fares have shot up, forcing people travelling to the countryside to dig deeper into their pockets.

Several offices will close on Friday for the Christmas break to allow their employees celebrate the festive holiday.

Towards every end of year, a big number of people working in the city tend to go back to their upcountry homes to bond with their relatives during the festive season.

A spot check done by this newspaper yesterday found out that majority of bus operators have increased transport fares by either Shs15,000 or Shs20,000.

For instance, at Link Bus Park on Namirembe Road, passengers travelling to Kabarole District were

paying Shs35,000 from the normal charges of Shs20,000 or Shs25,000, while those travelling to Bundibugyo by the same bus company paid Shs45,000, up from Shs30,000. Passengers heading to Kasese were paying Shs40,000 instead of the normal Shs30,000.

Travel chaos

At Kisenyi terminal in downtown Kampala, passengers going to Mbarara paid Shs25,000 instead of the normal fare of between Shs12,000 and Shs15,000. Those heading to Ntungamo and Rukungiri are paying Shs30,000 and Shs40,000 respectively, instead of the usual fare of Shs20,000 and Shs25,000.

The situation is not different at Namayiba terminal where passengers travelling to Gulu are charged Shs30,000, up from between Shs15,000 and Shs20,000. The transport fare to Kitgum has been increased from Shs25,000 to Shs35,000.

However, the situation was even worse for passengers travelling to the eastern region as there were no

enough buses at Qualicel terminal to shuttle them to their destinations.

For instance, passengers travelling to Mbale were being charged between Shs20,000 and Shs25,000, depending on the bus company, instead of the normal Shs15,000, while those travelling to Soroti were paying between Shs25,000 and Shs30,000 up from the usual fare of

“I decided to travel today because transport is likely to go up by tomorrow [today] and the following days and I have no option but to pay...”
STEPHEN WANGUSA, TRAVELLER

Shs20,000.

On Monday, there was only one bus from Y.Y Coaches Bus Company heading to Mbale while others had left earlier in the day. Although there were about 10 motor coaches parked, passengers who spoke to this newspaper said buses are more comfortable.

“I decided to travel today

because transport is likely to go up by tomorrow [today] and the following days and I have no option but to pay. However, there are only coasters [motor coaches] left but I prefer travelling by bus because it's more comfortable than a coaster,” Mr Stephen Wangusa said.

However, he accused bus operators of hiking transport fares despite the economic downturn.

Justification

Mr Henry Opolot, one of the bus agents for buses heading to Soroti, said the prices vary according to the season.

“The slight increment we usually make during the festive season shouldn't worry passengers because it's just short-lived. You can't rule out the fact that it's time for the festive season and we expect a lot of money in circulation,” he said.

However, some passengers who were not aware of the new rates, had to make frantic calls to family members and friends for top up.

Those travelling from Kampala to Moroto are paying Shs60,000 up

from Shs40,000 while fares from Kampala to Kaabong have been hiked from Shs47,000 to Shs80,000. Charges for Nakapiripirit from Kampala shot up to Shs65,000 from Shs35,000 while fares from Kampala to Amudat have been increased to Shs65,000 from Shs35,000.

The transport fares from Moroto to Mbale via Nakapiripirit have since shot from Shs25,000 to Shs35,000 while the fare from Moroto to Soroti, which has been at Shs20,000, has now been increased by Shs5,000.

Passengers have attributed the increase in the fares to few vehicles where only two bus companies operate in the sub-region.

Mr Patrick Lote, a bus driver, said they increase the fares because of the heavy cost of fixing their buses after mechanical breakdown.

“The extra money helps us to fix [repair] our buses and some of the spare parts are very expensive,” he said.

Daily Monitor has also learnt that other taxi operators and boda bodas are steadily increasing the fares within and outside the city centre.