



Last month, the government commissioned two new mono-hull ferries, MV BKK 1 and MV BKK 2, connecting Buyende, Kaberamaido and Serere districts across Lake Kyoga. PHOTO/MoWT.UG

New ferries slash travel time, costs for drivers

Uganda's latest generation of vehicle ferries is transforming travel across lakes, cutting journey times from hours to minutes, reducing vehicle wear, and opening faster, more efficient routes for motorists and traders alike.

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ERA

Sam Odida was travelling to Amolatar District for an important meeting scheduled weeks in advance. Keen on keeping time, he carefully chose what he believed was the fastest and most reliable route. He planned to drive through Sasira in Nakasongola District, cross the ferry to Zengebe and Namasale, and then proceed to Amolatar District.

For motorists travelling between districts separated by water, ferries are not luxuries. They are extensions of Uganda's road network, allowing drivers to avoid long detours that consume fuel, strain engines, and add hours to already demanding journeys.

Odida's journey by road progressed smoothly, and he was optimistic about arriving well ahead of schedule. However, upon reaching the landing site after branching off from Sasira, he was met with an unexpected setback. The ferry he had intended to board had already departed minutes earlier.

With no alternative crossing available, Odida had no choice but to wait.

The delay stretched close to two hours. What had been planned as a seamless driving connection quickly turned into a frustrating pause by the lakeshore. For motorists, such delays do more than disrupt schedules. They delay deliveries, interrupt business, and complicate logistics.

Despite the inconvenience, his host in Amolatar adjusted the meeting to the following morning, allowing him to rest and prepare. What could have been a major disruption became manageable, but it highlighted a familiar reality for many Ugandan drivers.

A vital but unpredictable link for motorists

Such unpredictability is not new to motorists who rely on ferries across Uganda's major water bodies, including Lake Kyoga, Lake Victoria, and Lake Albert. For many drivers, ferries provide critical links connecting districts separated by vast stretches of water.

Without ferries, motorists must take long alternative routes,

WHAT MOTORISTS SHOULD KNOW BEFORE BOARDING A FERRY

- 1. Arrive early**
Ferries operate on schedules, and vehicle slots are limited. Arriving early improves your chances of boarding without long delays.
- 2. Follow crew instructions**
Ferry operators guide vehicle positioning to ensure proper weight balance and safety.
- 3. Engage your parking brake**
Once parked, apply the hand-brake and leave the vehicle in gear or park mode to prevent movement.
- 4. Turn off the engine**
Switch off your engine during the crossing to conserve fuel and improve safety.
- 5. Check your vehicle before boarding**
Ensure your brakes, tyres, and steering are in good condition, especially when using steep ramps.
- 6. Be patient and plan ahead**
Weather and operational delays can occur. Always factor extra time into your travel schedule.

sometimes adding hundreds of kilometres to their journeys. This increases fuel consumption, tyre wear, engine stress, and overall vehicle maintenance costs.

Unlike conventional road travel, ferry crossings introduce uncertainties. Mechanical breakdowns can halt operations for hours. Bad weather can suspend services. Missing a ferry by minutes can mean waiting hours for the next crossing.

For commercial drivers, transporters, and farmers moving produce, these delays translate directly into financial losses.

Yet despite these challenges, ferries remain indispensable components of Uganda's transport ecosystem, supporting vehicle movement, trade, and regional connectivity.

New ferries changing the driving experience

Recognising their importance, the Government of Uganda has in recent years invested in expanding and modernising ferry infrastructure.

In 2025, MV Rafiki was introduced on Lake Victoria, operating between Nakiwogo in Entebbe and Bukasa Island. The ferry carries both passengers and vehicles, providing motorists with a reliable alternative to long road detours.

For drivers, this means reduced travel distances, lower fuel consumption, and less wear on critical components such as tyres, suspension, and engines.

Government efforts, expanded further in February 2026 with the commissioning of two new mono-hull ferries, MV BKK 1 and MV BKK 2, connecting Buyende, Kaberamaido and Serere districts across Lake Kyoga.

These ferries have dramatically changed mobility between the Busoga and Teso sub-regions.

Previously, motorists travelling between these areas faced road journeys lasting up to eight hours. Today, the ferry crossing takes just one and

a half hours. This represents a significant improvement but also a challenge in vehicle operation.

Faster crossings

For motorists, transporters, and farmers, the new ferries are forming both efficiency and reliability.

Sarah Naig says the improvement has opened new opportunities.

"It now takes half hours to do and Serere, the journey is uncertain."

Shorter journeys, reduced maintenance costs, and less time spent waiting are making the ferries more reliable.

The ferries are also improving the efficiency of rural production and private vehicle transporters between districts and supporting the economy.

Prime Minister described the new ferries as a "This is an economic revolution."

"This is an economic revolution. It's about efficiency and one and a half hours."

Built to last

The BKK 1 and BKK 2 are built to last. They are designed to handle heavy loads and provide a safe and reliable service.

The ferries are also designed to be easy to use. They have ramps that are wide and sturdy, and they have a simple boarding process.

For drivers, this means a more comfortable and safer journey. The ferries are also designed to be easy to maintain, which means they will last for many years.

2025
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