

Society

Kampala's hop-on, hop-off buses here for city tourism

BY TREVOR LUTALO

Kampala is taking a new approach to urban tourism with the launch of hop-on hop-off sightseeing buses, offering residents and visitors a structured way to explore the capital's cultural and historical landmarks.

The buses, unveiled on Saturday, are part of a wider effort by the Uganda Tourism Board (UTB) to boost domestic travel under the Seven Wonders of Uganda campaign. Speaking at the launch, UTB Chief Executive Officer Juliana Kagwa said the initiative is aimed at changing how Ugandans engage with their own country.

"Tourism is one of the four strategic pillars driving Uganda's economic transformation," she said, noting that the sector contributes between 7 and 9 percent of GDP and supports more than 10 percent of jobs. "Yet over 80 percent of Ugandans have never intentionally toured their own country."

The Kampala city tour builds on the Seven

Wonders concept, spearheaded by Bismac Moses Amumpaire.

"This initiative is about awakening awareness of Uganda's gems and under-celebrated sites," Amumpaire said. "It is also about turning ordinary citizens into ambassadors of their own country."

Operated by Promote Uganda Safaris, the double-decker buses carry more than 40 passengers and feature an open-roof option, giving riders uninterrupted views of the city.

The curated route brings together Kampala's historic hills and key landmarks, offering a layered view of its identity. Stops include Makerere University, one of Africa's oldest academic institutions, and the Kasubi Tombs, the burial grounds of Buganda kings and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Other highlights include the Bahá'í Temple, known for its quiet gardens, and the Namugongo Martyrs Shrine, a major pilgrimage destination.

The route also winds through Kampala's historic hills, Old Kampala, home to the Gaddafi National Mosque; Mengo Hill, the political heart of Bu-



UTB boss Juliana Kagwa flags off one of the city tourism buses. PHOTO/TREVOR LUTALO

ganda; as well as Namirembe Hill, Lubaga Hill, and Nakasero Hill.

Throughout the journey, trained guides provide live narration, placing each stop within the context of Kampala's political, cultural, and religious evolution. At select locations such as the Bahá'í Temple, visitors are encouraged to observe moments of silence, reinforcing the cultural and spiritual significance of the sites.

Pricing has been set to encourage accessibility.

Ugandans pay Shs50,000 per trip, while international tourists are charged \$37 (about Shs137,000). Two daily departures, morning and afternoon, allow flexibility for participants.

The introduction of hop-on hop-off buses marks a shift in how Kampala is packaged and consumed as a destination. By combining convenience with storytelling, the initiative positions the city not just as a transit point, but as an experience in its own right.