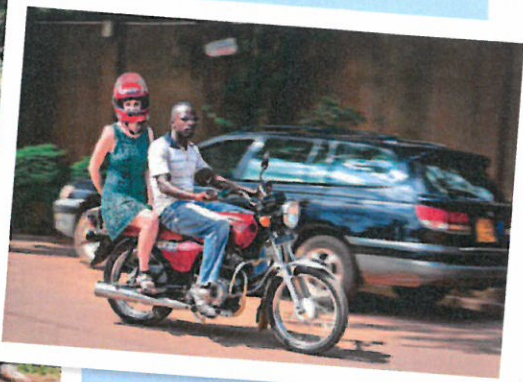




*Clockwise, from left: The group. Amy on the back of a boda. Coming out of a mosque. A boda tour. Entrepreneurial boda driver Walter. A "jam", as the locals call them.*



By Amy Fallon.  
Photographer: Clare Wise de Wet

# Uganda's fast rides

*Bodabodas*, Uganda's motorbike taxis, are arguably the fastest and cheapest mode of transport – and a great way to see the city

As I carefully negotiate the potholed road, a red helmet in one hand, a Bajaj Boxer BM 100 motorbike races toward me. Its driver – sporting a second-hand bomber leather jacket, corduroy trousers, trainers, crocheted hat and Ray-Ban sunnies – gives me a huge wave.

"Garden City. How much?" I enquire, trying to haggle the best price to one of Kampala's many shopping malls, after he pulls up.

"Seven thousand," he says in a deep voice.

"Six." I put one foot in front of another, beginning to walk away.

"Sit," he orders. So my day begins, the wind blowing through my hair and the, er, dirt blowing onto my face, as my cabbie snakes his way through gridlock the locals describe simply as a "jam". How could I ever go back to the London tube or Sydney buses after this?

You're very likely to see cows, TVs, mattresses – in fact, everything but the kitchen sink (actually, don't be surprised if you do see the kitchen

sink) – being carried on the back of these vehicles by the many thousands of Kampala's "smart" (read: stylish) riders.

They've been branded a "necessary evil" and "silent killers". But take *bodas* out of Uganda and not only would many people be stranded, but a lot of youth would also be jobless.

"I have many customers. This work helps me pay school fees and helps me with my family's other needs," says driver William Ntulume (33). This married father of four makes up to 50 000 Ugandan shillings (about R200) a day.

Walter Wandera (27) started riding a few years ago to put himself through computer school.

"Kampala wouldn't function without *bodas*: they're part of

our lifestyle. You don't need to plan ahead of time and they're fun – and affordable," he says.

The driver-turned-entrepreneur now runs *boda* tours of the Ugandan capital. "It's the best way to see Kampala because you smell the smells, see the sights and don't get stuck in traffic," says Wandera.

Highlights of the four-hour tour include the Parliament and palaces of Buganda, one of Uganda's royal kingdoms; Africa's only Baha'i temple; the city's best art galleries and craft markets, plus a local lunch at the 2k restaurant. Oh, and each passenger gets a helmet they must wear.

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Prices start at \$30 per person.

