

## **VOLUNTEERS WELCOME TO TANZANIA**

Congratulations on being accepted as **MAASAI LAND EXPLORER** next volunteer or Intern to Tanzania, You are embarking on an incredible experience and will soon be totally immersed in a culture very different from your own.

No matter how well informed you are about the culture, you will undoubtedly find some surprise as your Tanzanian experience unfolds. Apart from the culture shock, travel in developing countries rarely unfolds as planned and you must be prepared to be surprised! This is all part of cultural immersion experience which I wish to provide for you.

My intention is to help you understand as much as possible about the daily experience of Tanzanian families and individuals rather than observing Tanzania through the windows of a Tour bus! You will be both challenged and delighted as you live and work with the Tanzania people.

Westerners are often confused with “African Time,” which is slower and less anxiety-ridden. It is said that Africans are oriented to relationships and events, rather than to activities and achievements! Depending on your approach, this more relaxed attitude can be a source of irritation or an opportunity to experience a delightfully less stress lifestyle.

Languages reflect ideology and it's interesting to note how many Swahili proverbs relate to time.

Understanding this difference before arriving in Tanzania will help you arrive in a spirit of flexibility, understanding and good humor. Not only will there be unanticipated challenges, but also there will be unexpected joy and enlightenment.

You will be living with a family of limited means who will nevertheless be delighted to have you as their guest. While living with your new family, you will be welcomed into their daily life and have a rare opportunity to develop close connections with the adults and children.

The staples of Tanzanian diet are **Ugali**, a maize meal paste, and **mboga**, vegetables. Meat, chicken, eggs, beans, and tropical fruits are also served. The food is considered heavy, starchy and oily by American standards. Tanzanian mamas are not different from their Greek or Italian counterparts – they love to see people! Everyone will be eager to please you and willing to adjust to your eating habits. Vegetarians and other dietary needs can often be met.

As a guest in any home, your assistance with food preparation and other home chores will be welcomed. During your time in Arusha, it is important to honor local customs regarding dress and behavior.

### **Interactions with People:**

Tanzanians greet each other by shaking hands. When shaking hands, eating, touching another person or handling objects, do not use your left hand because it is considered unclean; if you hand something with left hand it is an insult. Avoid smoking in public and avert displays of affection. Also, please ask permission before you take somebody's photograph!

### **Privacy:**

Tanzanians have a different concept of personal space and privacy compared to Americans. You will be something of a novelty and, as people share everything from meals to common space, be prepared for constant companionship. **Possessions:**

Tanzanian culture requires people to share everything they own, so they may expect to be given some of your possessions. This is complicated by the Tanzanian notion of white foreigners as either Missionaries or benefactors. The concept of volunteer service is very new, so you may have to explain that you are not there to give money or goods, but to work with them and to lend a hand. You should, however, bring small items as gifts for members of your host family/community. Anything with the name of your hometown or USA on it will be prized.

### **Safety:**

While in Tanzania, participants must appreciate the impact their day-to-day decisions have on their own safety and health. Instead of a purse or backpack wear a belly pack in front or fasten small locks onto your zippers. Also store money in a money belt or flat purse won under your clothing. **DO NOT** travel alone after dark. In essence, be careful and use common sense. If you feel threatened or are being followed, step into a shop and wait. During nighttime, incase of emergencies use taxis and not "daladalas" (town busses), which are the common means of transport in Arusha town.

### **General Information:**

Tanzanians are eager to get along with participants. You should not be so afraid of breaking a cultural rule that you forget to interact with people. This interaction will probably be the single most single rewarding thing about your experience. Getting to know a culture through the eyes of its people can be a difficult, but fascinating experience! Be willing to take some chances to get to know people. They know you are not from their culture and do things differently. While this is not an excuse for improper behavior, it is a safety net. If you honestly try to be part of the Tanzanian culture, you will be rewarded with forgiveness for the occasional faux pas!

### **Health Precautions:**

As you prepare for your Tanzania adventure, please consider potential health risks associated with life in Tanzania. The Tanzanian Government doesn't require any **Immunization EXCEPT** for Yellow fever for entry into the Country. Please consult with

your personal physician, infectious disease specialist, The Centre for Disease Control, or travel clinic before deciding what preventive measures to take. In addition, be sure to discuss any pre-existing medical condition with your Physician.

### **Immunization recommendations:**

You may obtain a yellow fever International Certificate of Vaccination card (Yellow Card), which lists your Immunizations. This is useful when traveling to countries with Immunization requirements or if you ever admitted to Medical facility in another country. Cholera vaccine is not recommended. The vaccination is only 50% effective and some experts claim that it doesn't prevent or cure cholera, but merely reduces the signs and symptoms of the disease. The Centre for Disease Control doesn't recommend this vaccination, but seek the advice of your personal physician.

### **Important Information about Malaria:**

You may be exposed to Malaria during your stay in Tanzania. It is transmitted by mosquitoes, which are most active between dusk and dawn. To avoid being bitten, you should sleep under a mosquito net, spray sleeping areas with insecticide, burn mosquito coils, and apply mosquito repellent (containing diet) to any exposed skin every evening. Other suggested preventive measures include taking vitamin B1 to repel

insects and wearing long pants and socks in the evening. Even after taking all these precautions and using Mefloquine, there is still some chance that you may contract Malaria during your stay in Tanzania or even after returning home. Treatment is Oral- usually Fansidar a Quinine /Tetracycline combination or Quinine/Fansidar combination. Occasionally other drugs are recommended. With early attention malaria is treatable and has not been shown to result in long-term health problems.

### **Other Health Considerations:**

Diarrhea frequently afflicts world travelers, and conditions in Tanzania (food, water and climate) make it a common complaint. If, for example, you drink untreated water, you are likely to contract gastro-intestinal illness, which can last from 24 hours to 3 or 4 days. To help you avoid a bout of illness, the following is recommended:

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Treat water (even for tooth brushing) by either boiling for at least 5mins, running through a water purifier, or by adding Iodine droplets.

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Carry a small bottle of tincture of Iodine (available at your local pharmacy). Three or four droplets purify a liter. You should then let stand for ten minutes. Vitamin C tablets or powdered drink mix can improve the taste.

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Be cautious about drinking bottled water, which is sometimes just bottle of tap water.

Make sure the bottle seal has not been broken.

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Beware of ice cubes. They may be made from untreated water.

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Soft drinks, beer and wine are OK.

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Avoid raw vegetables and fruits unless they have a thick peel that will be removed. Try to eat foods that have been cooked or that you have peeled yourself.

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Salads are risky because they may have been rinsed with tap water.

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Wash hands thoroughly before eating – air dry them rather than using dirty towels or your own clothes.

Diarrhea rarely prevents one from enjoying the day's activities as long as toilet is nearby!

Suggested cures for gastro-intestinal illness include:

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Drink lots of fluids and let it flow- this is the healthiest solution. Anti-diarrhea medication can actually prolong or worsen your illness by trapping the pathogens in your body, which your body is desperately trying to avoid.

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Although Pep to Bismol and Lomotil is popular, some physicians do not recommend it, as it simply stops up the diarrhea without getting to the root of the problem.

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Imodium, while only slightly better than Peptones, it may come in handy if you can't get to a bathroom for a while (i.e. on a bus trip).

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Anti-biotic can be very effective, but should only be used as a last resort and if you have been examined and diagnosed by a physician and /or if you have had a stool test.

**Sunburn:** Tanzania sits close to the equator. The equatorial sun is deceptively strong and can inflict severe burns, even on overcast days, so take precautions against over exposure to the sun.

A good moisturizing sunscreen and lip balm (chapstick), with protection factor of at least 25 is strongly recommended. Long-sleeved shirts and a wide-brimmed hat will also help.

### **Jet Lag tips:**

According to current research, the following actions will help you overcome the sometimes unpleasant effects of jet lag:

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Eat as little as possible during long flights. Some people recommend vegetarian meals (Give Airline 3 days notice), which tend to be lighter and more digestible.

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Avoid coffee, tea, cola, and alcohol as they are dehydrating.

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Light sleeping pills can help you sleep on the plane and regulate your pattern upon arrival in Tanzania. Consult your physician.

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Upon arrival, expose yourself to lots of outdoor daylight on the first few days and sleep in a fully dark room (use mask if necessary)

These health concerns and preventive measures may seem forbidding or frightening but be assured that you are unlikely to be exposed to, let alone contract one of these diseases.

Thousands of tourists visit Tanzania every year and experience no medical problems. Also, be aware that you will always be within a short distance of health care facility, while you are in Tanzania.

### **Suggested Personal Care / First Aid List:**

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Prescription medicines in their bottles. No unlabeled vials or bottles.

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Milk of Magnesium for Travelers Constipation

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Sting-zee or other types for insect bite relief.

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Neosporin or other type of antibiotic cream

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Your favorite athlete's foot preparation.

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Moleskin and Band-Aids for sore feet.

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Favorite remedies for cold symptoms.

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Alka-seltzer or other similar products for upset stomach.

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Sun block for lips.

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Aspirin, Tylenol, Ibuprofen or other mild painkiller.

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Adequate supply of any vitamins you use.

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Thermometer.

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Bar of soap, shampoos,

Deodorant and other personal hygiene items. These can be purchased in Tanzania if you would prefer.

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Kleenex, moist towelettes or baby wipes.

### **Clothing and equipments List:**

I hope this checklist will help you prepare well for your trip to Tanzania. When you are packing, bear in mind that:

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You will spend most of your time in the countryside so focus on casualness, comfort and health.

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Day time temperatures are generally in the 80's, nighttime temperatures in the 50's or less, so layering of clothing is suggested (T-shirts, long sleeved shirts, sweater, light jacket, etc)

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There are mosquitoes. Every possible precaution should be taken to ward them off.

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You may be hand washing your clothes, (don't bring detergents; it's available locally) so when choosing your wardrobe, remember colors are easy to clean that whites!

### **Required List:**

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Valid passport with a Visa

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Photocopy of the passport pages where your picture appears and where the visa is attached. Keep this photocopy in a separate place incase you loose your passport.

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Other form of identification with photo (US driver's license is fine).

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Insect repellant: No more than 30% DEET recommended.

**Suggested Items:**

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Money belt for the copy of your passport (leave the original at your home stay as it is safe there), money and traveler's checks.

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Pair of Comfortable sneakers.

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Light-weight hiking shoes.

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Small locks for backpack.

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Sun block.

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Sunglasses and good sunhat.

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Extra pair of prescription glasses.

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Small flashlight with extra batteries and bulbs.

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Light-weight rain gear.

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Another warm long sleeved layer.

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Light weight long pants - cotton is preferable.

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Travel alarm clock.

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Journal for keeping diary.

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Gifts: lapel pins, shirts, picture/photo (coffee table) books of your home area.

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Light-weight day pack.

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Photographs of your family and home.

### **Optional Items:**

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Light weight sandals

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Water bottle i.e. Nalgene

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Camera with case – insure if valuable. Buy all film in US.

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Medium size towel and washcloth.

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Sewing kit.

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Personal first aid kit.

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Appliance converter and transformer for 240V.

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Binocular and sleeping bag (If you choose to do safari).

I hope the information answers some of the many questions you will have about your upcoming adventure! May your Tanzania experience be a rewarding and life learning for both you and your home stay family!

I wish you the best of luck and I look forward to working with you soon.

*Peace!*

*Project Director*

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