



Informational Packet

TRIP OVERVIEW

Welcome!

I'm so happy that you have an interest in joining us on this trip. We have an amazing opportunity to not only have fun, but also to make new friends all for the purpose of make a difference in people's lives. This is a little information package for our trip. It should give you an idea as to what we will be doing, what you need to do before we go, and what to expect once on the trip. If you need to get a hold of the group organizer at any time please see the contact info below.

Location: Massai Mara, Kenya
Dates: March 1-13, 2017
Project: Construction of School and VBS

Purpose:

The purpose of this trip is primarily to create cross-cultural relationships. Our hope is to provide opportunities for relationship building through which Christ can be shared. To facilitate this we will be working on different projects. Our projects will include: construction, holding medical clinics and running a Vacation Bible School.

Trip Includes:

- In-Country Transportation
- Lodging
- Food
- On Site logistics
- 2 Day Safari
- Travel Insurance

Does *not* Include

- Visa (\$50 per US Citizen upon arrival in NBO)
- Drinks, Laundry and spending cash (see below for more info)
- Transportation to/from USA airport

Partners

Our hosts for this trip will be Africa Mission Services. AMS has an extensive history in Kenya and will be making our entire project and lodging arrangements. For more information on AMS please visit their page:

Africa Mission Services

<http://africamissionservices.com>

Africa Mission Services Facebook

<http://www.facebook.com/africamissionservices>

Leader Contact Info

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Contact Info in Kenya

We will be staying with Africa Mission Services at Mara West Camp, Kilgoris Road, Trans Mara. Emergency information in case someone must contact you from the USA while on the trip: Andrew Aho, when dialing from USA, dial 011-254-733-479177.

Getting There

We will arrive in Nairobi and we will travel directly by land to the Masai Mara. At the airport, plan on exchanging money to the local currency to buy souvenirs/food/etc and to have money while at the camp. Exchanging at the camp will be extremely difficult (read more under the Exchanging Money in Kenya Part). Also plan on having all the things you need for the drive down as your luggage could be in a separate vehicle.

Here are some tips for traveling internationally:

- Buy a money pouch and keep your documents safe. Make copies of your documents and take a set with you and leave a set with a family member/friend at home. We also recommend scanning and emailing yourself a copy.
- Travel smart – don't leave things unattended, and/or “scream tourist!” ☺
- Travel with a pen handy. Keep it with you; don't store it overhead while flying. You'll need it to fill out forms in the planes.
- Keep passport with you; don't store overhead unless you have memorized your number and dates.
- When filling out the Kenya Entry Card, state that you are entering Kenya on Holiday, visiting Africa Mission Services in Trans Mara, Kenya.

- Pack carefully and avoid carry-ons as much as possible. Patience will also go a long way!
- Pack an extra change of clothes, toothbrush and essentials in your carry-on as sometimes luggage does not come through immediately. Keep liquids to a minimum, as security will be tight.

SCHEDULE AND ITINERARY

Itinerary

Day 1	Fly out of USA
Day 2	Arrive in Amsterdam
Day 3	Arrive NBO & drive to Mara West
Day 4	Work on Projects
Day 5	Attend Church/Rest
Day 6-11	Work on Projects
Day 12 and 13	Safari in the Maasai Mara
Day 14	Depart NBO for USA
Day 14	Land in USA

*subject to change and availability until group contract secured with deposit

Helpful Information

Kenya Climate

A common mistake is to assume that Kenya is hot and humid. It is not. The elevation of your travels is between three and seven thousand feet and most often the temperatures range between 75 to 85 degrees during the day and between 50

to 65 degrees during the evenings and night. You will want a variety of clothes to switch back and forth between, a few cool items as a first layer with some warmer things on top. You will find that you dress warmly first thing in the morning and take off layers as the day progresses, only to put them back on towards evening. A warm coat or sweatshirt is good to have along. Rainy season is typically anytime between October – December and March – June. Along with lots of rain and mud, the temperature can feel especially chilly during a good downpour. It should be noted that Mother Nature has not been following the rainy season schedule very accurately and rain should be factored in as a possibility during any mission trip.

Changing Money in Kenya

Kenya currency is known as Shillings and varies in value between 80 and 85 shillings to \$1.00. Bureaus of Exchange and banks will only buy bills printed **after 2000**, and they must be in fairly **good condition**. (If your bank finds this hard to believe, inform them that currency dated 1996 and earlier has been counterfeited so much that bureaus of exchange wish to avoid any bill with those earlier dates on them.) **\$100** and **\$50** notes get the best rate of exchange. \$20s and \$10s get lower rate. Traveler's checks get **very low rates**. *IMPORTANT: If you wish to be financially independent, **when you first arrive and are waiting for your luggage to arrive, exchange money at the Exchange Bureau by the luggage carousel.** You will then have Kenya Shillings with you on your trip down to camp.* Otherwise, AMS will **TRY** to assist you by exchanging money once we reach camp, but we cannot guarantee that we will have enough Shillings on hand to do so. Please, **DO NOT** ask us to exchange \$1s, \$5s, \$10s, \$20s. **WE CANNOT USE THEM IN KENYA.**

NOTE 2: I cannot tell you exactly how much money you need to take. However, plan on at least \$100 for Kenya souvenirs and another \$50 for visa and misc. expenses. Remember that in Kenya you will need to have cash to exchange for local currency. Also plan on about \$10 for tipping the drivers/safari guides, etc.

Advice on Tipping in Kenya

For many travelers, tipping in a foreign country is confusing and awkward. To help take some of the guesswork out of it, the following insights are offered.

Tipping, while always optional, is an effective method of showing appreciation to people who serve you well. Many, many of the local people you meet while traveling throughout Kenya come from some degree of impoverished

circumstances and are most likely contributing to the support of a large, extended family. Most workers are paid about \$100/month. Your tip is a nice way of sharing your personal good fortune while reinforcing good work ethics and generating goodwill. AMS encourages those who can to show their personal appreciation as they travel from place to place throughout Kenya.

In general the following amounts are suggested as appropriate tips.

If you stay overnight at hotels or lodges:

50 – 100 Ksh to porters who carry your luggage to your room

100 – 200 Ksh left in your room at the end of your stay for your housekeeper.

If you eat in a restaurant with service (a service charge is included in some restaurants, but in general most clients leave an additional tip for good service) a minimum of a 10% tip is in good taste. If you ride in hired vans and your driver was polite, helpful, careful and friendly, a small tip of 100 – 300 Ksh per person is appreciated.

In Camp and Amongst the Masai

Interaction with the local Masai community by AIM volunteers leaves a lasting impression as to which Americans, Christians, and AMS volunteers are. This impression will affect the mission groups who follow. If the impression is positive it helps to pave the way for more positive experiences to follow. If the impression is negative or if complications follow some unfortunate situation, it affects future relationships between AMS, the community and any future volunteers. For the most part, common sense and simple Christian courtesy are the keys to good relationships, but some pointers are in order.

About Dress

In introducing the American culture into the midst of the Masai culture, an area of possible offence is that of dress. The Masai are familiar with the American and European form of dress as they are exposed to tourists who travel throughout their area. In general, Masai are quite accepting of the cultural differences, yet at the same time there are standards to which volunteers should be sensitive. Women especially should be aware of the need to dress modestly. Tight, revealing clothes will attract a great deal of unwanted attention from Masai men and cause resentment amongst Masai women. Keep shorts near the knee and avoid spaghetti

strap, low cut tops, and leave the trendy fashions, like hip hugger jeans and exposed midriffs, home.

Camp Boundaries

Think of camp as private space, a home without walls. It is important to keep some sense of boundaries to camp, to maintain control as to who comes and goes and what goes on there. AMS does not encourage the community to visit the camp. There are certain arranged times when community Masai come into camp to sell their crafts, but for the most part only staff and hired help are permitted to be in camp. While inviting community friends to visit volunteers in camp may seem harmless, if someone's camera suddenly goes missing, the recent visitor will inevitably be on the list of suspects. It is simply easier to avoid such complications by agreeing that visiting takes place at the work site, the church or in the Masai's homes.

Photographing People

This can be a highly sensitive issue. Be very careful about taking people's pictures without first asking. It's a quick way to create hard feelings and to be regarded as an opportunist and intruder. It is possible to get pictures of tribal people, but it must be done diplomatically and considerately. Be aware that even if Masai agree, they will most likely expect some sort of payment once the picture has been taken. Some of the best opportunities for taking photos are at the various mission and work sites, as the Masai who are present are often participating in the activities alongside the volunteers in a spirit of goodwill and are willing to have their pictures taken without charging.

Personal Possessions

Do not travel with unnecessary valuables that you cannot afford to lose. Pay special attention to any valuables you do choose to bring, such as expensive camera equipment. Furthermore, be careful in your relationship with the community, not to let the vision shift from mission development to that of personal gain. While you might generously like to make gifts of all you've brought, please be careful. Your good intentions may affect more than you realize. We do not want the Masai to be asking for your watches, cameras and shoes. We do not encourage significantly enriching one individual over the others as it will only create jealousy. In practice, it works best to minimize the individual gift giving during the mission trip and at some point towards the end make collective contributions to the community, school or village on behalf of the group.

Oftentimes, volunteers are tempted to throw candy to children while passing by without realizing that this practice has negative results. Masai children are raised to be polite and humble and elders are frustrated to see their children now begging and demanding “sweeties” from visitors. Once again, a wiser, more culturally sensitive approach would be to pass out goodies in an organized setting, such as at the school, the clinic, or while doing village visitation where it can be given personally and children can show good manners.

Personal Decorum Between Opposite Sexes

Kenyans are friendly, polite people who are for the most part broad minded about cultural differences. This is especially true of those who are educated, work in tourism or live in urban areas. In rural areas, however, cultural differences lead to major misunderstandings. To avoid such misunderstandings it is best to keep behavior conservative between opposite sexes. What an American woman may mean as a friendly hug may be perceived by a Masai man as an aggressive sexual advance. Although it is difficult to avoid every possible misunderstanding, it is wise to realize that cultural differences do exist and to adopt a conservative approach to relationships with the opposite sex as the best way to avoid sending messages you never intended to send.

Wildlife Conservation

The Trans Mara region of Masai Mara is a high profile area that has attracted significant attention from individuals and groups who are very committed to conservationism. If some of these conservationists had their way, there would be strict controls implemented that would deny all but the wealthy access to the park. Their point is to preserve the area by limiting the amount of traffic and influence it is exposed to. Fortunately, they have not been given the freedom to control the park this way. Nevertheless, the issues of conservationism are utmost in the minds of those who manage the park and with some international figures who study wildlife in the Mara. All of us need to realize that their concerns are entirely valid and be supportive of them in a proactive way. We need to do our best to protect the environment, to be respectful of the wildlife and to show our commitment to matters of conservationism and ecology.

Thus we ask that mission groups always keep the camp clean of trash, never litter at any time in any place for any reason, deal respectfully with the terrain and plant life, never chase or be aggressive in any way toward the wild animals that graze in

the area, and never ask locals to find for you any sort of skin or teeth, etc, that might encourage them to kill for profit. Please note that it is highly illegal to take any indigenous product out of the park or to leave Kenya with animal horns, teeth, skins, etc, even if found lying around on the ground.

Also, please bear in mind at all times that the AMS camp borders the park and that it is completely plausible for dangerous animals to be in the bordering areas of the camp. Do not wander off by yourself or take early morning or late night strolls into the brush that borders the camp. Also, do not walk down the escarpment into the park below, as you will be most likely be spotted by the Rangers, arrested, and charged a \$60 park entry fee.





Medical Information

Note from the Camp

“You do not have to have any shot but we suggest having your tetanus up to date. It is up to you to decide how vaccinated you want to be. If you do not eat with the locals and wash your hands aer visiting the community and refrain from exchanging body fluids with the Masai, you should be fine. But, that said, contact your local Travel Medical Clinic. They will probably tell you to get a whole list of shots.”

Malaria

Malaria is a serious disease that can be fatal if not treated properly. The illness ranges from a vague sense of poor health to that of a nasty, relentless flu. Symptoms almost always include fever, chills and body ache, and often a good measure of stomach and bowel distress. Obviously, an ounce of prevention is worth several pounds of cure.

Malaria is spread by the anopheles mosquito, which comes out in the cool of the evening. It is not common to find malaria in the area of the Trans Mara where the AMS camp is situated, and to date we have not had any problems with mission groups contracting it. But it is a possibility that should be taken seriously.

Please talk with a doctor several weeks before your trip to see if you should begin a malaria prophylactic for your trip. You will take this prophylactic during your time in Africa and a couple of weeks after you return to the States. Also ask your doctor for a malaria treatment that you can take if you in fact do become sick with malaria

while on the prophylactic. Some may decide not to take a prophylactic. This is a completely personal decision that we leave up to you and your doctor.

Yellow Fever

Yellow Fever is the only vaccine that is legally required for entry into Kenya. The requirement is not enforced if you are flying into Kenya from a country where the disease is not endemic (such as USA). Although it is stated that yellow fever is endemic in Kenya, we are not personally aware of anyone who has ever had it and do not feel it is necessary to get the vaccine.

For more information about health issues in Kenya, AMS recommends checking out the Travel: Kenya Health Information site at www.travel.yahoo.com.

Donation Items

Think Development, Not Christmas

Often, individuals want to bring items to donate to the community and ask AMS's advice on what is needed. Sometimes a great deal of effort has gone into carrying things over to Kenya (often at the expense of extra luggage) and then once here the volunteers realize they should have / could have brought more needed items. Although it continues to be a learning experience for everyone, the following guidelines are offered.

As development establishes more schools in the Trans Mara area, the need for supplies is continuous. Although the government attempts to provide basic supplies, at best they are meager and at worst non-existent. Thus, schools always appreciate supplies, even as basic as chalk, pencils and erasers. In addition, various picture books, educational books, reading books, etc, help to expose the children to additional reading material. Also, these schools provide education for up to 400 children each. There is an endless demand for soccer balls, jump ropes, and other recess items that teach the children coordination and provide wholesome entertainment.

What to avoid: Trinkets and breakables that will litter the school yard or lose their parts, becoming useless almost immediately. Junk food in general -- better to pass out soaps, toothpastes, toothbrushes, etc, than to foster a taste for candy and gum.

Clothing: Children, once again, provide a ready market for donated items. Children's clothing of any sort is greatly needed. In addition to the normal shirts, trousers and dresses, look for socks, underpants, and shoes. Babies are abundant amongst the Masai and cloth diapers, blankets and baby hats/booties are always appreciated.

Adults appreciate clothing also. Women wear dresses and skirts with blouses. Men wear long trousers and shirts. Once again, socks, underpants, and bras for women are appreciated. Stay away from large sized clothing. People are slim and larger sizes are not easy to give away.

In addition, special gifts of watches (cheap), caps (baseball style hats), pens, and scarves are always appreciated. Bibles can be purchased over here, but if you have some at home that are sitting on the shelves unused, better to bring them to give out than to bring unnecessary trinkets.

What to avoid: Large sized clothing, women's pants, adult shorts.

Safaris

Africa Mission Safari's camp sits on the edge of the Oloololo Escarpment, overlooking Masai Mara. Considered by many to be the greatest game reserve in the world, Masai Mara is 1500 sq. miles of savannah abounding with wildlife. Traditionally the land of Masai people, the Reserve is the northern-most tip of the Serengeti, extending over the border of Tanzania into Kenya. The Reserve is most famous for the natural phenomenon known as The Migration. Every year up to 3 million animals graze their way around a 2,000-mile loop, crossing into the Mara from the Serengeti sometime in early August to mid September. Comprised primarily of 1.4 million wildebeest, the migration includes 550,000 gazelles, 200,000 zebra, and 64,000 impalas, as well as a host of predators who see opportunity in such numbers. For nature lovers, photographers and sightseers alike, The Migration is a fascinating event of magnitude and beauty. During the rest of the year, Masai Mara continues to be an incredible place to view wildlife. Resident

wildebeest, zebra and antelope share the reserve with elephant, giraffe, hippo, cape buffalo and a host of predators.

AMS offers volunteers full day safaris into the Reserve and does its best to ensure up-close and personal experiences that are unforgettable. Safaris depart camp after breakfast and, depending on the stamina of the clients and the cooperation of the weather, return when the park closes at dusk. Most people find that 2 days in Masai Mara is sufficient to see a wide variety of wildlife and get some fantastic pictures.

AMS provides a delicious picnic lunch under the shade of a beautiful tree in the heart of the Reserve. Many groups who schedule a 2-day safari opt to have one lunch back at camp and the other as a picnic.