

# Kenya Travel Tips

## Preparations

- Research the most common health problems in Kenya. The following sites might prove helpful:
  - International Registry of Tropical Imaging [tmcr.usuhs.mil](http://tmcr.usuhs.mil)
  - Paediatric Infectious Diseases – Tropical Medicine  
[www.paediatric-infectious-diseases.com/tropicalmedicine.htm](http://www.paediatric-infectious-diseases.com/tropicalmedicine.htm)
- Review recommended readings and research diseases and treatments that you will most likely encounter in Kenya. Review the Recommended Reading List for your appropriate program; it can be found on the program website.
- Learn basic Luo phrases from [About Kenya](#), prepared by Gary Snyder and Jaja Yogo.
- Read about the culture(s) that you will be immersed in.
- Obtain a valid passport and visa.
- Make sure that you have all immunizations recommended by the CDC at <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/>.
- Review What's Up With Culture? Website ([www.pacific.edu/sis/culture](http://www.pacific.edu/sis/culture)).
- Review Bobcat Abroad materials.

## Before you depart

- Review recommendations of U.S. Department of State at [http://travel.state.gov/travel/student\\_tips\\_brochure.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/student_tips_brochure.html).
- Register with the U.S. Department of State prior to departure ([http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/registration/registration\\_1186.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/registration/registration_1186.html)).
- Leave a copy of your travel itinerary, passport and visa with Cheri Sheets and a family member.
- Leave credit card, ATM card and traveler's check information with a family member.
- Contact your airline to reconfirm whether or not your flight is a) still departing; or b) departing on time. If you cannot reach the airline through its toll free number, check its website. Reconfirmation is required 72 hours in advance for most airlines.
- It is recommended that you spray your clothes with permetherine for the best mosquito protection
- Double check your tickets to make sure travel dates and times are correct.

## What to pack

- Please see the appropriate packing list for your program.

## How to pack

- Items that you have packed in the past may no longer pass through security. Knives of any sort are unacceptable. Remove items that may appear to be

threatening (e.g., scissors). You can find a complete list of restricted items at [www.tsa.gov](http://www.tsa.gov).

- Make sure all suitcases and carry-on bags have completed name tags.
- You MUST bring a government-issued photo identification card or passport. You will not be allowed to check-in without this. Also, make sure that the name on your ticket is the same as the one on your passport. (For married female students, it will be easier for you to have all of your documentation under the same name, either your maiden name or your married name, just be consistent).
- If you have an E-ticket, bring your E-ticket and a printout of your E-ticket receipt or confirmation with you. If you can't produce printed evidence that you have a ticket, you may not be allowed through the security checkpoint. A confirmation number may not be sufficient; you will likely need a printed receipt or official confirmation notice.

### **Checking-in for your flight**

- Allow PLENTY of time to check in. The recommended minimum is now two hours prior to departure for domestic flights, and three to four hours prior to departure for international flights.
- Expect restricted airport parking. Some airports may require that you park off-site and take a shuttle to your terminal.
- Curbside check-in and off-site location check-in may not be available.
- Do not leave baggage or vehicles unattended; airport security will be completing thorough sweeps of airport properties. Anything left unattended will be immediately removed.
- Expect to see an increased presence of law enforcement personnel outside the terminal and inside the building.
- All passengers will need to check-in at the airport ticket counter.
- Unticketed passengers, without boarding passes, will not be allowed past the security checkpoint.
- Be prepared to empty all your clothing pockets and remove your shoes. Be prepared to demonstrate operation of electronic equipment such as cell phones, laptop computers, etc.
- Expect increased passenger and baggage searches. Wand checks and/or full body searches can be expected.

### **If your flight is cancelled or delayed**

- Airlines are not responsible for providing alternate transportation or accommodations when flight cancellations or delays are caused by circumstances beyond their control, including government orders or acts of war or terrorism. Airlines may, as a customer service gesture, help you locate accommodations or alternate transportation, but they have no legal obligation to provide any assistance or pay for alternate transportation or other costs occasioned by delays or cancellations. Airlines must either refund the amount you actually paid for your tickets, or allow you to use them on alternate flights once service resumes. This is their only legal obligation.

- Travel insurance policies vary in whether they cover expenses from flight cancellations or delays caused by government orders or acts of war on terrorism. Contact the claims department of your travel insurance company for advice on coverage and claims procedures. (Note: Medical evacuation and repatriation insurance, which students are required to have, is not to be confused with travel insurance.)

### **At the departure gate**

- Do not leave bags unattended.
- Expect to see law enforcement personnel and dogs.
- You will need your ticket, boarding pass and photo identification (again) to board the aircraft.
- Expect to see teams of individuals board the aircraft before general boarding in order to sweep the aircraft as an added security precaution.

### **Once on board**

- Expect to see random searches of service personnel, flight crew, equipment, and passengers.
- Be patient if the flight is delayed. Passengers boarding and baggage loading are being carefully coordinated by ground handling crews.
- Be sure to drink plenty of water and periodically get up and walk around.
- The flights are extremely long and the entire journey takes 18-24 hours, so bring books, cards and other entertainment.
- You may want to bring a change of underwear, a shirt, baby wipes, a toothbrush and toothpaste to freshen up during your European layover.

### **Upon arrival**

- Proceed through the terminal, beyond security. Meeting parties will be restricted to areas outside the security checkpoint.
- Have your luggage receipts available when retrieving luggage for verification.
- It is illegal to take photographs at Jomo Kenyatta Airport.
- For those of you traveling with the SHARE Kenya-Ohio program, Dr. Bonyo will meet you at the airport and help escort you through the visa process. The address to use on your application is P.O. Box 370 VIA Kisumu (Bonyo's father) or you could use the address of the hotel. Please state tourism as your reason for visiting Kenya.
- Don't worry, there are plenty of people who speak English as it is one of Kenya's official languages.
- For those of you traveling with the Kenyan Grandparents Study, Dr. Ice will help you through the process at the airport.

### **Once you arrive, you should consider**

- Setting goals for the experience with your preceptor/supervisor, including what you hope to learn, what work functions you would like to learn more about, and what career related skill you hope to acquire.

- Keep a log or journal of your activities and reflections, particularly in regard to any professional or cultural insights you gain. (Procedure log is required for 4<sup>th</sup> year medical students seeking credit.)
- Make an effort to learn about the culture and get to know people.
- Keep your preceptor/supervisor apprised of your activities, even if this does not seem to be required.
- Be open-minded and willing to revise your goals if necessary; your experiences could lead you in a new direction you did not plan, but will provide new opportunities.
- Ask questions, do not make assumptions.
- Do not drink the water.
- Do not brush your teeth with the water and do not drink anything with ice.
- Only eat fruit that can be peeled.
- Only eat cooked vegetables and well cooked meat.
- You cannot wear open-toed shoes in the clinic.
- Bargaining is a way of life in Kenya, you should pay about ½ of what local vendors name as their initial price.
- Give a gift to your translator. We recommend against a cash gift, but old clothes or unused OTC medications are appreciated.

#### Safety tips

- When in Nairobi, do NOT walk anywhere unless accompanied by a Kenyan – even then it is advisable to take a cab. Do NOT carry a purse, backpack, fanny pack or any visible equipment (e.g. cameras). Carry a limited amount of money and no credit cards. It is advisable to keep your passport and credit cards in the hotel safe if available.
- Always lock your suitcase when out of your room and lock in any valuables.
- In Kisumu, it is ok to wear a fanny pack and backpack but be cautious. Locks are recommended for your backpack and a hidden money belt is recommended for most of your cash. It is ok to walk into town during the day, you should however, walk in with at least one other person. It is not generally safe to walk to and from town at night – cabs or hotel transportation is the safest.
- There are many street children in Nairobi and Kisumu and many of them sniff glue. You should not give them money. You can give them food but that can invite more children than you can handle.
- Be careful about showing people money. Do NOT flaunt it – you put yourself and others at risk.

#### Attire

- Scrubs should be worn to clinic, the hospital or in the field for research.
- Sneakers/tennis shoes are also recommended for the clinic, hospital and in the field.
- It is culturally inappropriate to wear shorts in the village but ok in the city. Be careful not to wear skimpy shorts or skirts – you will attract unwanted attention.
- Women should not wear tank-tops – they are generally only worn by prostitutes.

- Make-up is rarely worn by women other than prostitutes so it is not wise to wear it. It is acceptable while you are on safari or in Mombassa (general tourist sites).
- Long-sleeves and long pants should be worn at night to prevent mosquito bites.

### Cultural issues

- Hand-shaking when greeting people is an important custom – you generally shake hands with everyone when first meeting them. Holding the right forearm with the left hand is considered a sign of respect for elders or leaders.
- Time is not as important to Kenyans as it is to Americans. People are used to waiting for others. Do not be in a rush to get somewhere on time or to finish a meeting quickly – you will just get frustrated.
- It is considered rude to ask someone to come by curling one/multiple fingers up – your palm should point downward if you use your hands to call them. Pointing is rude.
- Approval should be shown with two thumbs up.
- Eye contact is important to establish trust.
- People generally acknowledge titles (Dr., Professor etc.)
- If you learn just a few words and use them, people really appreciate it. A couple of key words: hello (Masawa in Luo, Jambo in Kiswahili), goodbye (Oriti in Luo, Kwa heri in Kiswahili), welcome (Karibu in Kiswahili), thank you (Erokamano in Luo, Ashante or Ashante sana for thank you very much).
- When welcomed into someone's home, you should sit on the outside wall (or any wall not on the bedroom side) unless invited to sit elsewhere.
- Hand washing before and after a meal is custom – women will bring a basin with soap and boiled water in a pitcher. They generally do not have anything to dry your hands with.
- When served a meal it is important to try most if not all foods and to finish your plate. Although you might find some foods unpleasant, people can get offended if you do not finish the food, so be polite and eat all that is offered.
- People recycle pretty much everything in Kenya. Glass bottles must be returned to the vendor from which you purchased a soda. If you have water bottles or plastic cups, people will gladly take them and re-use them. Your translators will also appreciate any clothing you might want to give them.
- Because people are very poor and they see Americans as having more money than they know what to do with (it does not matter that you are a poor student), they will often ask you for stuff. Requested items range from money to the shoes you are wearing. It is hard but it is ok to say no. On the other hand, if you can part with an old shirt, it would go to good use.
- If you give individual children gifts, you may have a swarm of children requesting something and if you are not careful it can lead to fights. However, if you tell children that they are to share, they are good about it. If you want to give a group of children a gift, it may be best to give it to an adult in charge (e.g. a teacher or parent).
- If you want to give people food, it will be appreciated but hand it to individuals. If you place items in a central location, people might swarm and someone can get hurt.

- Afternoon tea is a common tradition.
- Now that they can, Kenyans love to talk about politics. Be prepared to listen to long debates and comments about American politics that you may or may not agree with.
- It is common for people of the same gender to hold hands and dance together – it does not say anything about their sexual orientation.

### **As you prepare to return to the United States**

- Request a meeting with your supervisor/preceptor, discuss your initial goals, accomplishments and experience as a whole.
- Ask for a letter of recommendation, as your supervisors may be difficult for future employers to contact.
- Formally thank people for your experience.
- If appropriate, provide feedback that might be helpful in the preparation and supervision of future participants.
- Revise your résumé or document your experience immediately, while your experience is fresh in your mind.
- Be prepared for reverse culture shock. You may want to visit [What's Up with Culture?](#)
- Share your experiences with friends, family and classmates.