

June Starfish Travel Team

Experience Kenya

Starfish Mission Statement: To design and fund a K-8 school and community center in Mathare, Kenya.

Starfish Vision Statement: Starfish International seeks to create a safe, welcoming, and accessible learning environment for the community of Mathare, Kenya. We envision funding the purchase of the land and construction of the building and then hiring a director of operations who will implement a curriculum approved by the Starfish International Board and oversee the staff, students, and community members who come to “Little Stars K-8 School & Community Centre”. Little Stars K-8 School & Community Centre will offer learning opportunities for both children and adults alike. To the extent possible, we envision that the operations will be self-sustaining through ongoing tuition and fees, but will continue to fundraise for capital improvements and scholarships.

Why are we doing this?

- It is important to understand different cultures, to have new experiences, determine new likes and dislikes, and truly understand why we need to build this school. I can tell you that one in five people in Mathare are HIV positive with a life expectancy of three years. I can also tell you that there is a city like Denver a mile away from Mathare, while Mathare is walled off and mostly ignored. But you won't be able to say that you heard the call to prayer in the city of Nairobi or that you know what the Indian beach smells like. You can have knowledge without understanding. If possible, Starfish International strives for understanding.

The total cost for the trip will be somewhere around 3,000 dollars. There will be a more accurate estimate when the team decides on the route, the number of days, and the experiences are approved.

Experiences:

- White Sand Beach Resort in Mombasa
- Including a tour of Mombasa
- Tour of Mathare and the school site
- Tour of Nairobi
- Including feeding giraffes and elephant nursery
- Safari in Masai Mara

Optional multi-day stop on the way back from Kenya

- Rome, Italy
- London, England
- Hamburg, Germany
- Zurich, Switzerland
- Doha, Qatar

Suggested Itinerary:

June 6th: Travel Day

June 7th: Arrive in Kenya (Kenya Comfort Hotel)

June 8th: Free Day - Nairobi Tour (Feeding Giraffes, Elephant Nursery, History Museum)

June 9th – 12th : Diani Beach/Mombasa resort

June 13th: Travel to Nairobi (Kenya Comfort Hotel)

June 14th – 16th: Masai Mara

June 17th-18th: Tour Mathare and the school building site, Volunteer work

June 18th: Travel Day

June 19th – 21st: Optional Trip

June 22nd: Travel Day

Step 1:

- Finalize trip details and dates
- Time: First week of January
- We need to finalize the experiences, the optional trip, and the duration of the trip.
- **CHECK YOUR PASSPORT**

Step 2:

- Tickets:
- **Price:** 1,000 – 1,500
- **Time of purchase:** Early January
- For the purpose of convenience and to make sure everyone stays on the same flight, Jasmine will be purchasing all plane tickets. You will need to pay Jasmine directly by early January.

Step 3:

- E-Visa: <https://evisa.go.ke/evisa.html>
- Create an account here!
- **Time of application:** Early February

- It is a tedious process and will take a while to get approved. Please do this as soon as possible, though the team will need to have the travel days approved first. Please click the link above and let Jasmine know once you have started and completed the process. If you have any questions or need support, please talk to Jasmine.
- You need to keep your E-Visa with you at all times in Kenya. It is as important as your passport. You will also be asked for it at every check in the airport, along with your passport.

Step 4:

- Shots and Medication
- **Price:** 0 – 70
- **Time of Appointment:** Late March
- You will need to make an appointment at your local health department to get the shots you need for Kenya. The yellow fever shot is not required and it is not produced in every area. You will need your tetanus shot as there is a lot of sharp scrap metal lying around. Your doctor may suggest that you get your rabies shot, it is not something that I believe to be required.
- You will also need to call your doctor's office to get anti-malaria medication. I suggest doxycycline mono. If this is the medication you are prescribed, you will need to start taking it 2 days before the trip and continue to take it for 2 weeks after the trip has ended.

Step 5:

- Nairobi tour, Mombasa Resort, Safari purchase:
- **Price:** 750 – 1,300
- **Time of Purchase:** Late March
- There is a team in Nairobi that will pick us up from the airport and stay with us through the tours in Nairobi and the tour of Mathare. They will also take us to and from the safari and the resort. You will be paying Jasmine directly.
- Phone international plan
- Decide on the phone plan for your journey. Our hotels have WiFi, but there will be train rides and times during the safari when having data is nice. Most plans include unlimited text and 25 cents/minute voice. They also include 100 Mb of data with their international plan, but this can go VERY quickly, so make sure to regulate the data usage on your phone during your time in Kenya.

Step 6:

- Packing:
- **Time:** A week before the trip

- In addition to your carry-on, each person will need to take one large suitcase under 50 pounds. Each time Starfish International takes a trip to Kenya, we bring donations. These include: feminine hygiene products, pencils, baby supplies, soap, shampoo, conditioner, school supplies, shoes, clothes, toys (balls, stuffed animals, etc.). We would love help fundraising for these items before the trip. We return with items purchased from Mathare that we auction at a fundraiser or sell from our website.
- Suggested packing list:
- Laundry service is available in Mombasa, however, it costs 2-5 USD per item. I suggest bringing 4-5 items of each clothing item that you are comfortable re-wearing. You will be using a carry-on and a personal item to pack your items. You may use a small space in the large suitcase that you are bringing. However, the suitcase may get lost, so do not put anything you will need in the large suitcase.
- I suggest wearing appropriate clothing in Mathare and Nairobi.
- Jasmine will be carrying a first aid kit including an epi-pen, antibiotic cream, gauze, Band-Aids, disinfectant wipes, etc. **This should not discourage you from bringing your own!**
- **You need your passport!!!**
- Clothing
- Closed-toed shoes and open-toed shoes (comfortable)
- Underwear
- Socks
- Shirts
- Pants and shorts (beware of mosquitos if you are wearing shorts, however, it does get quite warm in Mombasa)
- Swimsuit
- Shirts and/or tank tops for Mombasa
- Pajamas
- Sunglasses
- Hats
- Medication
- Mosquito repellent
- Anti-itch
- Anti-Malaria medication
- Personal medication (including; ibuprofen, Excedrin, etc.)
- Sunscreen
- Something that will help you sleep on the plane
- Allergy medication
- Personal Items
- Phone charger
- Binoculars for the safari

- Additional battery backup for charging
- Computer
- Books
- Feminine hygiene products
- Shower shoes
- Razer
- Shampoo/Conditioner
- Body Wash
- Lotion
- Toothbrush/Toothpaste
- Nail clippers
- You may want to bring snacks that you enjoy as the food is quite different, and that can be overstimulating. You may also have times when your allergies or restrictions don't allow you to have the food.
- Electrical Adaptor – Kenya uses the UK plugs
- Neck Pillow
- It may help to bring something that you like the scent of (including; lotion, perfume, hand sanitizer, blanket, etc.) as the transition from Grand Junction to Mathare can be very overwhelming and overstimulating. The scent is very different, if you believe this might help the transition, I suggest that you bring it.

What to expect:

Tipping

- It is important to remember that most college graduates initially hope to make 300 USD a month. This is about 200 KSH an hour at a very good job. Tipping is not always required, in fact, there is usually not a place on a check to leave a tip. You should tip a server 10 to 15 percent of the total. If you want to tip you should bring shillings. However, keep them in a pocket that cannot be pickpocketed. Remember that it is dangerous to give someone money who has never had that much money before. Kids

will come and beg you for money, do not give them any because it is dangerous for them to have it.

Mombasa

- We will take the train to Mombasa. Mombasa is a beautiful resort with a white sand beach, water sports, monkeys, birds, fish, and all the food you could want. The journey to get there is very interesting, though. When we get to the outside of the building there will be someone to look inside the car. We will go through four or five security checks that include searches, metal detectors, and security dogs. There will be men holding guns, which is a bit of a shock. However, you know the place is safe.

Where to get shillings

- There will be a place at the airport to get shillings. I suggest not bringing any US currency because it is not safe to travel with a large sum of money. There is a five-minute drive from Mombasa to an ATM. **You should want somewhere from 200-400 USD total for spending money.** This includes al la carte foods at Mombasa, souvenirs, and purchasing anything you've forgotten.
- Shillings have an exchange rate of 100 to 120 shillings to 1 dollar. To get a rough idea of how something costs in US dollars, just move the decimal point two places to the left.
- If you are wanting to bring cash to change, against my advice, please remember that there are certain years of bills that they will not exchange for you. Also, the bill must be in good condition.

Time moves differently

- Most things can happen at any point in the hour. For example; if someone says 11, expect that thing to happen anywhere from 11 to 11:59. It is important to know if you have a type A or type B personality for this trip. Things will be as on time as possible, however, it is important to remember that we are stepping into a different culture. Things can be moved around, please note that you will be kept up to date on everything as it comes. A local expression we have heard is, "We do things in time, not on time!"

End of Trip

- At the end of the trip, there will be an optional video diary as a team. It helps Starfish International spread our mission. We will also be having a fundraiser after every trip if you would like to volunteer to talk about your experience and what you have learned.
- Again there are still decisions to be made. I am so glad you have decided to be part of the Starfish Team. Please reach out with any questions or concerns to Jasmine.

jasmine@starfishinternational.us