

Dear Volunteer,

I have no doubt that you will be in for quite a few shocks along the way. The best way I have found to deal with them is to be as prepared as you can beforehand and to keep an open mind and go with the flow once you are there. Tanzania is not the US, things don't happen fast, the bureaucracy is frustrating and having to pay for everything just because you are a "mzungu" is very annoying. But as I said, relaxing and changing your expectations depending on how the situation evolves is the key to making progress. Things that I would suggest you do immediately are to get your vaccinations - some require a series of injections over a course of weeks so better get started now. Make sure you get your anti-malarials, its a very prevalent illness in Midawe. Also, look into your health insurance - if it does not cover international travel you may want to get a policy through a group like Seven Corners.

Look into a data plan for you phone and check what it would cost to roam, depending on how much time you spend there it may make sense to buy a sim card although I never got around to it. Text messaging was the best way to communicate with the outside world, but it adds up. And mobile internet is usually the only internet available to you.

Gaspar's house does not have running water or electricity. He would turn on his generator every couple of days to charge the PC and the phones. Cooking is done over an open fire. If you have any food restrictions make sure to mention them beforehand and if you have to, bring something to snack on along with hand sanitizer. You will get around on the back of Gaspar's bike or via buses and dala-dalas (small vans). It will be pretty intense.

Next, we have the packing list. The best way to go about it is to pretend that you are going car camping - that's about the level of amenities you would usually expect. Your major expense would be food and transportation to and from the airport. Typically, when I am in-town with Gaspar I would pay for his meals, gas and bus fares. I would also come along to the market once a week and pitch in with buying groceries for the family.

Gaspar usually gets me bottled water while we travel and I always have Purell and WetOnes on me. Another good idea is No Rinse shampoo since washing up is always an adventure. Do bring Immodium and Pepto Bismol, but I honestly never got sick. A head lamp with batteries is handy, a light sleeping bag and a travel sheet insert are a good idea. Also if you have a linen, denim or any other wrinkle free blazer to bring it along to look sharp at official meetings. Women do dress conservatively, so dressing smart would gain their trust. I also highly recommend you invest in something of that sort:

- http://www.amazon.com/Grand-Trunk-Silk-Sleep-Sack/dp/B001AIHFUO/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1341691975&sr=8-1&keywords=silk+sleep+sack
- http://www.amazon.com/Petzl-E91-PE-Headlamp-Electric/dp/B0027GVIOW/ref=sr_1_2?s=sporting-goods&ie=UTF8&qid=1341692024&sr=1-2&keywords=headlamp
- http://www.amazon.com/No-Rinse-Products-Shampoo-oz/dp/B0045E9LS4/ref=sr_1_2?s=sporting-goods&ie=UTF8&qid=1341692086&sr=1-2&keywords=no+rinse+shampoo
- http://www.amazon.com/Suisse-Sport-Adventurer-Ultra-Compactable-Sleeping/dp/B001TR7QZA/ref=sr_1_1?s=sporting-goods&ie=UTF8&qid=1341692138&sr=1-1&keywords=ultralight+sleeping+bag

You are allowed to check in two bags for free. I would ask that you reserve one of them for a load of school supplies or books. Please check with your airline about the maximum weight you can carry and let me know.

Sincerely,

Masha Skuratovskaya, Ikirwa School Project