

## TRIP TO TANZANIA

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### Day 1 in Tanzania

It's been a long long day, it started off at T5 on Saturday about 4 o'clock where I waved good bye to what I thought was going to be my last luxury, my cafe latte at cafe Nero. But then as we got through security, we stopped with the group, Vanessa, Nooshin, Rob, Mia and I had our last supper at Wagamamas. We then rushed to our flight, which was already boarding and braced ourselves for a long 9 hour flight, which once again had another last supper. Before we knew it, it was 7 am local time and we had landed in Tanzania's capital Dar es Salaam. However we had to wait til 11.30 for our next flight to Mwanza. When we first stepped into the airport, already it was a culture shock, as we 'queued' for a visa some random guy in a uniform came and took our passport and 50 us dollars and came back about 20 minutes later with our visas, (nothing like England). Once we got our visas, we grabbed our luggage and made our way through the back corridors of Dar es Salaam airport. Only to re check in and wait 4 and a half hours. We went to get a coke, which proved difficult as no one spoke English well and we had un check out of security, we finally got out and order our cokes in traditional glass bottles and this guy just barges in front of us and ordered. We were slightly baffled by this as the people seemed tactile but really weren't fazed by us thinking they had pushed. Although we didn't argue and let them pass. A similar thing happened to us just moments later at the check in desk where again a man barged in front of us. Again we were baffled but just carried on. After a long wait and an hour and a half flight, flying over Tanzania's highly populated capital city, which looked like shanti towns from above.

We finally arrived at the Mwanza airport! Again a MASSIVE culture shock! We received our luggage in a tiny cramped room through a slot in the wall, again irritating to a group of 4 women and just 1 man, the men got their luggage handed to them first. We then got to arrivals where we met Amy and Kate. The owner of the baby home, and the volunteer coordinator, also English, took us to the volunteer house just down the road from the orphanage. We quickly settled in, meeting our 8 housemates, got a quick tour and freshened up with a freezing cold shower. (No hot water) as well as very little electricity as it constantly cuts out. By this time it was 3 o'clock and these 3 cute toddlers aged 5 all turned up at our house with Kate. Musa, Abdalla and Leyla (Amy's adopted child who is deaf) but so beautiful, happy and smiley. Musa was the most confident and just so bubbly, he jumped on top of us and gave us a massive kiss on the cheek. Abdalla was much more shy at first but as soon as he got to know us he was just as excitable as the others. We got them in the car and drove along the very very bumpy dirt track roads to the near by school where there was a swimming pool. On the short car journey Kate explained there is a hierarchy with older men, then older women, men, women, children and then disabled people. Which is why we kept getting pushed out the way when in queues.

You are also meant to greet your elders with Shikamoo ( I kiss your feet) with a bow and they reply Marabar ( you must 1000 times)

We also had guard dogs but NOT pets! This is because Tanzanians strongly believe in witchcraft and the dogs and cats are part of it so don't keep them as pets and strongly fear them, so they are great guard dogs.

Stealing is seen as a massive crime here as well as abandoning babies and they get stoned in the village if they commit these crimes. However rape is acceptable.

Once at the pool we got the kids changed they jumped in the pool and loved the water. Just as they jumped out Abdalla fell over and wouldn't let go of me until we got him stopped crying by telling him we would go into town and grab chicken and chips. As we pulled up we saw 3 kids in dirty clothes called 'the street kids', they were banging on the car windows begging for anything even the children's books. It was heartbreaking as their six little eyes looked at us but we was told not to give anything as it just encourages them to stay on the street. We then went to the baby home and took a tour, where they were feeding the 6-12 month babies. Mia and I went into the garden and got swamped by the 30 or so children jumping on us and begging for our attention, as they all toddled around in their bare feet. A beautiful girl about 5 Zwaddy, was so bubbly and copied what I said and called me George which she found highly amusing. All the kids at first called us Amy as she was white and anyone white resembled Amy. One girl didn't even like white people and was scared of Amy herself as she had obviously grown up with no white people. We then learnt how to change nappies and had lots of cuddles with the new born, three, which were triplets. Another had hydrocephalous (water in the brain) and sadly didn't have long to live. All the babies were then going to sleep and so we left back to the home with a stop off at the local market, which her small dustbin shacks selling fruit. People waved and smiled, all very friendly shouting Muzungu !Muzungu ! Meaning: white people. Kate explained on the way home that Musa was going to be adopted by a lady from New York named Lauren. Which was fantastic news. However sadly Abdalla is now 5 and has to now be moved to another orphanage. After a very long day we were extremely tired and crashed out about 8 o'clock on my top bunk under my mosquito net, skipping dinner, at this point I started to get the feeling we weren't going to be eating very much this week.

## **Day 2 in Tanzania**

After what I'd call perhaps a short night in a hard and uncomfortable bed, I was rudely awakened but the cockerels at 4.30 am and the storm that was brewing. But I can't say I wasn't warned. I'm not looking forward to a week of these early mornings.

We went on a walk at 9.00 pm up what we were told was going to be only a 45 min up to a peak where we were able to see lake victoria. After what was a 45 min

Walk up there, through the villages, meeting the locals and saying jumbo as they passed. When we got to the top of the rock there were thousands of tiny dead fish. We asked our tour guide Garison, why they were there and he told us they had been evaporated from lake victoria and apparently it rains fish. The views were breath taking and we took loads of photos. As we walked back we saw 5 monkeys, which come and steal the babies food in the home. We also saw a straw hut, which Garison seemed very wary of. Later he told us that it was the hut of the witch doctor and if you are ill or wants a family member dead you go to the witch doctor with a banana skin and he snaps it and when you return home that family member is dead. He also pointed across lake victoria to an island, this is full of witches and nobody ever goes there.

Garison told us he wanted to become a footballer and he plays football with the rest of the town at 4pm everyday, but when the scouts come over from England all the coaches just put forward their sons so Garison doesn't have a chance.

We then began our afternoon shift at the home, where we started off by meeting the 6-12 month old babies. I first met a boy called David who very sadly had scars on his arms and face and seemed to be stripped of a personality. I then met Elisha (a boy) who I spoke to Amy about. She told me he was twins with Elizabeth who I mentioned yesterday as she had hydrocephalus. However they are kept apart as Elizabeth is kept in with the tiny babies in case she bangs her head, which they have tried to cure twice already but have failed. Back to Elisha, both the twins ended up as forever angels as their mother was put in a psychotic hospital as she tried to throw her two babies out a 9th floor window. Elisha is going home tomorrow however Amy seemed displeased about this as he has already been home before and brought back as his father couldn't cope. Sadly he didn't want Elizabeth home.

Next we played with the toddlers, which is very physical as they jump all over you. Once again Musa and Zwaddy came home from school and jumped on us for a massive cuddle. I also found out Zwaddy may also be getting adopted; however she is a little terror. Her adopted parents to be are even paying for her private schooling. The mammas play with them all and braid their hair, sing songs, but they are quite rough with them, but I feel that it's just part of the culture here. After a day with the kids I was knackered and we walked up to the local hotel to pick up some local grub which was delicious and cost us just 20 pounds for 5 people with drinks. Cleverly, we forgot it was going to be nighttime when we left the restaurant and forgot a torch and stepped in a massive puddle. Good times! We got back to the house in one piece and in true British style had a cup of tea and went to bed.

Earlier during my conversation with Amy she told us that a lot of the women that claim to be psychotic aren't and just suffer from postnatal depression which doesn't exist here and so put them on really strong drugs and if they weren't ill when they went in they are when they come out and most of them forget they even had kids and that's why they end up in the orphanage.

### **Day 3 in Tanzania**

Mia and I stayed in bed this morning whilst Vanessa attempted the morning shift. We were awoken by Musa and Baraka (named after president Obama) who had come to the volunteer house with Vanessa. We quickly grabbed a cup of tea and took Musa and Barak back to the home for school.

We met Amy who had agreed to take us tanzanite shopping, this is a rare stone mined in Tanzania which is worth a lot back in the UK, so I decided to invest in one for my mother.

We then went back to the baby home and played with the littlens. We were asked if we wanted to take them for a pre nap walk and we agreed, next thing I knew Nooshin and I both had mammas wrapping babies to our backs African style. I must admit I wasn't convinced they were safe. I carried Vicky a baby with hydrocephalus, which is water on the brain. However she has had a stunt and all has appeared to have gone well and should be cured. They say it is very common here due to the mining near Lake Victoria. Amy said she tried to start up a research campaign on it but the government told her she wasn't allowed and if she carried on she would be exiled. Vicky fell asleep on our walk and as we returned I put her straight to bed. We rounded up the rest of the troops and feed them and put them for their afternoon nap.

It was now lunch time for us and Vanessa and Mia were back at the house preparing lunch so we asked if we could take a few kids back home. We looked at the board to see who has been taken out the least and we picked David, Nyriamfo and Alfonze who had never be taken out. However Abdalla was upset earlier when Vanessa couldn't take him out so just as I persuaded the others to take four our Abdalla was naughty. It broke my heart as he kept asking me "please take me Claudia" I gave in and just pleaded with the others and made him promise that he would be good. But my gosh was that a mistake they were like a bull in a china shop being little terrors especially as Mia and Vanessa were stocking the four of them up on E numbers. Once we took them back to the home it was dress up time and I made a new friend Anthony and Ella. Anthony is a mixed raced boy and it is thought his mother was an escort. He has to have a special diet, as he is one of 2 people in the world that are allergic to protein. A family who has already adopted one of Ella's friends is adopting Ella soon and they can't wait to see each other although it will be about six months. The adoption laws here are very tight and take a long time to process. Especially for muzungu! They recently changed the law that you have to be in a relationship to adopt as they were getting young volunteers who weren't thinking of the consequences adopting children as they just fell in love. Which believe me is so easy to do.

Tonight we went into town to go on a boat ride in lake victoria, with all the volunteers. Amy told us loads and loads of really interesting stories about all the kids and we then had the most beautiful 7 course Japanese meal. (It's not all-hard work). Once home we sat and had a cupper tea and the other volunteers were telling us of the disgusting stories of the hospital, where they would walk in with a dying baby and they would be told to sit down and wait on a bed full of blood. Kelly said she shouted at them, cried and begged just to get this baby seen too! But they just called her the mad muzungu. As they just couldn't comprehend the fact she cared so much for a child who wasn't hers. Unfortunately baby Barak died and she had to carry, bathe, and dress a dead body and place it in his tiny coffin. He was supposedly found by a couple 12 months ago and then brought to them. But Amy believed it was just a last plea to save the babies life. But unfortunately keeping baby that isn't yours is obviously a crime out here and so those parents were arrested and couldn't attend the funeral. Night we are going to brave the early shift tomorrow.

#### **Day 4 in Tanzania**

Wow, what a day !

I woke up at 6 o'clock ready for the 7 o'clock shift but as I went to wake up Vanessa and she suggested we go back to bed for a couple more hours. So I went back to sleep only to wake up at 9.30 am to a massive panic. Immigration had been in the baby home looking for volunteers on the wrong visa. As they caught one of the others we were told to make a swift exit out of the baby home to the top of the hill with no shoes! With the local Tanzanians shouting at them mad muzungu as they ran through a school learning their vowels. Once the coast was clear they ran 200 meters down the road to the volunteer house. This is when we were told we must go to immigration so they could check us out. So off we went down to immigration, bricking it! I must add. We spoke to the guy at the front desk and he told us to go up stairs and see the head of immigration! All I can say is thank god for Amy! She told them we had donated money from England and just came to look at where our money was going. My heart

was beating so fast and I just kept quite. All was fine in the end and we just went and grabbed some food. After we started the afternoon shift at the orphanage. As we walked in the smell of wee just hits you and for some reason it was worse than normal. We played with the kids in the garden for a bit then we promised we would take Zwaddy, Musa, Abdalla, James and my favorite little Anthony all out for soda. Once we took them back we dressed up the kids in Christmas clothes and took pictures for their sponsors and newsletters.  
after a long and rocky day we just crashed on the sofas.  
And now a power cut! Yey! I do love living African style.

### **Day 5 in Tanzania**

Today has been another overwhelming day; we woke up to what I would call a much less hectic environment to the day before. We got up and headed straight to the baby home and to meet Amy and Kate as they were taking us to visit Bugando deaf school. Once we got out of the car my heart sank into my stomach. What I saw was old buildings with no windows and 100's of kids wanting to shake our hands as we as muzungu were a novelty in the school. I must have shook at least 20 people's hands by the time I reached the classroom which we were visiting. There were about forty people in the class which was tiny and more of a shed. There were people sharing seats and standing and all sorts. We started off by signing our names in Swahili and then showed them where we were from on a map, which Amy had donated. Thank god for Kate. Both Kate's parents are deaf and so sign is her first language, but British sign. She has been here just 3 months and already spoke better sign than the teacher, who didn't seem to speak any sign at all, just like most teachers in the school or Mwanza of that matter, hardly any of them teach and just leave the children to their own devices, bearing in mind their families pay for these schools. We then got the speaking about British football teams, which they seemed very interested in. Just before we left we handed out 2 pencils each, which was very upsetting as they were fighting over colouring pencils. It just made me think how greedy we are back home.

We then stopped for a spot of lunch at Bintis which I only realized after was the main income for the street project. The street project is for the kids on the street to come and have a safe place to sleep. This is a charity run by a 23-year-old named Vicky. Yet another heart wrenching experience, as there were about 50 young boys in bunk beds in a cramped shed. They showed us their classrooms as well although all the walls were bare and we asked why and she said that the children steal the posters to sell in the streets. The smell was also something that hit me in both places, it didn't seem that hygiene was something that was very important to them.

After an emotional morning we went to start our afternoon shift at the baby home. We played in the garden and took them into to all be bathed and put them in their jammies and I sat with Anthony and had a lovely cuddle before putting him to bed. It's going to be so hard to say goodbye for good.

After another enduring day we went up to Ladson Lodge grabbed a chicken curry and hit the pillow.

### **Day 6 in Tanzania**

It's our last night tonight so we just wanted to cramp one last visit in. This was to a school, which taught English to children as young as 8 to adults aged 40. We walked in and once again we were swapped with hand shakes from young and old there were about 120 people in a large room however it was still a little cramped. This was Garrison's school and he told us it costs him 20 000 shillings a month which is the equivalent to just 10 GBP. They taught through music as they had music system at the front and microphones. We then got up and they asked questions about the English language. It was the first thing in Mwanza which I thought was a worth while school and although it wasn't all learning it was keeping people off the streets and giving them hope to their dreams.

We then went to the baby home to start our afternoon shift, which seemed longer than normal and it was chucking it down and we had to stay inside. We fed the kids and then they decided to jump in a massive puddle so we had to change 25 kids nappies and clothes whilst they all ran round the garden naked having a great time.

Bed time was soon approaching and just before they read them a book telling them about adoption and where they will go. This showed them pictures of past orphans who had been adopted. I found this quite upsetting, as the reality was that most of them would end up in worse orphanages. I then put Anthony to bed and our shift ended.

As it was our last night we quickly got changed and headed for the most posh hotel in Mwanza and it cost 120 dollars a night and it was amazing but completely empty as very few Tanzanian's can afford to stay there. Nevertheless we had a lovely meal and headed home for the last night in this shitty bed. Good times

Early shift tomorrow, wish me luck.

## **Day 7 in Tanzania**

Once again we failed to wake up on time. But as soon as we did we headed to the baby home to do our last shift. I started off by feeding Marcus. Once again it was raining so all the toddlers were causing riots in the playroom. It was a rather uneventful last day. I said goodbye to Anthony as he went to sleep and that would be the last time I would see him before I left. I then said goodbye to Musa and he drew me a picture to put up on my wall at home. Just as we were on our way to the airport Amy got a call from social welfare asking if she could take an albino child. She looked slightly worried. "Why do you look worried?" I asked. She then informed us of a famous tradition in Mwanza. Albino babies are thought to be good luck, so the locals murder them, chop up their body parts and jar them. They then sell them to rich Tanzanians as good luck charms. This poor child has already had 4 attempts at its life and if Amy didn't take it in, it would for sure be killed. This was a hard decision, as she didn't want to put the other 60 children at risk. I actually don't know the decision Amy made but I'm sure she wouldn't have given up on the child and would have taken it in.

We then left back to the volunteer house to pack up our things and head for the airport where would start our epic journey home.

I often asked Amy how she dealt with all the traumatic scenes I had witnessed daily and she said after a while you become de-sensitized to it. However as of yet I still felt pain and sorrow for these gorgeous children and seeing them has just made me want to do more for them.