

Urolink Travel Report 2011

Department of Urology, KCMC Hospital, Moshi, Tanzania

Supplementary Report

1. Planning

- Think ahead – you will need at least 18 months to properly arrange the placement and the necessary documentation.
- Urolink – everything you need to know about working with Urolink is easy to find on the website www.baus.org.uk/urolink. I enjoyed chatting with various members of the committee about my proposal and listened carefully to the advice I was given regarding establishing a placement. Often, ideas will evolve and it is fantastic to be able to speak to individuals who have great experience in working in medical centres throughout the developing world.
- OOPE – it is important to make sure that all your plans are clearly discussed with the Programme Director and current/future educational supervisors. You will also need to liaise with your deanery to ensure that the time away is validated and the OOPE or OOPT forms are processed. It is hard to get this time recognised as formal training and be sure to check with the SAC about approval.
- I spoke to lots of people who have been to the area before who helped to organise my own trip.
- Ensure you have a clear idea of how you will spend your time and try to establish a timetable or training programme before you leave the UK.
- You will need to make sure that the appropriate notice is given to your local NHS trust regarding leaving your job. Liaise with your human resources department.

2. Travel

- Visa – you will need a visa to enter the country which can be purchased on arrival. A visiting visa is \$30-40 whilst a working visa is \$500.
- Baggage – try to pack light but ensure that you have the essentials locked away. Bags will be broken into and I would advise that padlocks and cellophane wrapping are crucial. An excess baggage charge will be levied for medical supplies. This can be reduced if a formal approach is made to the airline in advance through the charity.

- It is not an easy place to get to directly so be prepared for changing flights and negotiating in airports and for transfers to the hospital.
- Local transport is poor but cheap. The safest way to get around is on foot or by taxi. You can get the phone number of local drivers from students on campus. Alternatively, try the dala dalas which will show you a different side to living in Africa. They are crammed and a little dangerous!
- Bicycle, motorbike and car hire can be arranged but is often quite expensive.
- Buses operate from the centre of town to Arusha, Nairobi and Dar es Salaam. They are crowded and take a long time but one-way trips are under £20 and safe/comfortable. Head for the Moshi Road to find the small bus depots.

3. KCMC Hospital

- The hospital is about 4 Km outside of Moshi and occupies a large site. The urology unit is based in one wing on the ground floor. You will quickly orientate yourself to the other departments plus the university and on site shops.
- Everyone is amazingly friendly and will help to make sure that you are well looked after and enjoying your time in KCMC. The town is a little more eclectic and it is unwise to wander around after dark. Groups will be found leaving the doctors' compound regularly throughout the evening.
- The working environment is basic and I would advise that you take surgical scrubs, gloves and safety equipment with you. A well-fitting white coat will help you to blend in.
- Keep an eye on your belongings as items have been known to go missing!
- Doctors' compound – most international visitors will stay in one of the houses on site. It is adjacent to the hospital. I arranged my own place but equally you can share with others but often it is 2 or 3 people to a room. A maid is available and I would try to talk to other visitors before committing to a price.
- Electricity will cut out frequently. Ensure you have a selection of torches and headlamps. Most cookers are electric so plan your evening meals carefully.

4. Eating

- I was ALWAYS hungry.
- The best places to eat on site are the canteen (chicken and rice) or the university restaurant (various curries). In town and around the hospital, there are plenty of restaurants, pubs and coffee shops to choose from selling mostly African or Italian food. There are a number of supermarkets but fresh food is a little harder to source.
- Beer and water is incredibly cheap.
- International foods will have a large mark up in price. I took a selection of non-perishable goods to get me started in the first few days.
- Check your guide books as everywhere is listed with accurate descriptions.
- The Watering Hole – this bar does not appear in local guide books and is a regular hang out for expats. Good drinks and reasonable bar snacks are combined with an al fresco cinema. Warning – it is not easy to find and it is only open on Thursday and Saturday!

5. Things to do

- Tour guides – there is a competitive atmosphere amongst the local tour operators and a good deal can be negotiated. Larger groups often get the better prices. They are scattered around town and you will be approached as you walk from place to place. Be prepared to haggle and pay in cash (US dollars).
- Climbing – I chose to climb Mount Meru which is the sister mountain to Mount Kilimanjaro. It can be climbed in 3 days but is gruelling and requires a decent level of fitness. We were supplied with knowledgeable guides and support staff who helped to carry the equipment to the various stopover points. Accommodation is basic and sleep is in short supply. The meals are surprisingly good given that they are cooked at 3000m plus on a small gas stove. You will need to negotiate a tip for your team depending on their level of experience. It is possible to climb including use of equipment, park fees, tip and accommodation for less than \$600.
- Other activities: hiking, safari, swimming (YMCA or local hotels), golf, cultural tours, workshops, shopping/haggling. It is easy to find people who are keen for an adventure and one of the tour operators will help to arrange everything.

6. Communications

- Mobile phones work throughout Tanzania with good coverage. High costs are easy to incur.
- Internet – 3 options:
 - i. Internet shops/Cafes – various expenses and reliability.
 - ii. Hotels – often have Wi-Fi so you can connect a laptop but will charge a little more (\$4-5 for 30 minutes).
 - iii. Mobile broadband – used by the locals and some longer-term visitors. Visit the shops in town to negotiate a deal. Take your laptop in and they will make sure that things are working. Zantel comes highly recommended with laptop dongles costing £20 and unlimited online packages around £40/month.
- Newsletters – I wrote home once a week and it allowed me to explain in more detail everything that I was getting up to. Apparently, they were a real hit! I found out later that copies were circulated all around town so be careful what you write!

7. Funding

- Volunteer work – remember this is unpaid and so covering running costs at home can be difficult without a salary.
- Local currency is Tanzanian Shillings (TSH). US dollars are easy to exchange or pay directly for certain items (e.g. tours). Traveller's cheques can be difficult to exchange. The bank at the hospital offers poorer rates than town. ATM machines appear to work well. Credit cards are next to useless except in larger chain hotels.
- Urolink Fellowship – generous awards are available from Urolink directly sponsored by a grant from the BJUi. Make sure applications are carefully written and submitted in good time prior to the deadline.
- Industry – smaller grants are available from pharmaceutical and medical device companies upon direct request.
- Travelling fellowships – various charities and academic societies often help cover costs for individuals planning time overseas.

I would be delighted to talk to anyone interested in spending time at KCMC. I can be reached by email on o.kayes@nhs.net.