



Welcome to Kuti Community Wildlife Ranch

Volunteer Information Booklet

Contents

Welcome to Kuti.....	3
Introduction and Preparation	
Malawi.....	4
Kuti.....	4
Preparation for your Trip.....	5
Packing for your Trip.....	7
Arriving at Kuti	
Accommodation.....	8
Your Role at Kuti.....	8
Disclaimer.....	9
Contact.....	9

Welcome to Kuti Community Wildlife Ranch

Welcome to Kuti! As the volunteer coordinator, I would like to thank you for your interest in working with us and hope that it will be an exciting experience for you.

At Kuti we are 100% committed to creating and maintaining a beautiful haven for Malawi's wildlife, while ensuring the sustainability of the local community, and would like to welcome people from all backgrounds to take part in our vision, while giving them an opportunity to embark on their own personal journey.

This booklet is intended to provide more detailed information about working at Kuti and about the country of Malawi. Once you have read through the booklet, and if you still want to continue with your application, the next step is to let us know you're interested and we will see you through the process from beginning to end. If you have any questions along the way please don't hesitate to get in touch. It is important to remember that you shouldn't be afraid to ask any questions. No question is too "silly", as we feel it's important for you to be as comfortable and well informed as possible before joining us here in the Warm Heart of Africa!

Once you have read through this booklet and you are happy to continue with your application please contact us and we will set everything in motion. Initially we will need a deposit from you to confirm a reservation of your place. Once we receive your deposit we will proceed to confirm your trip and provide as much information as we can to ensure that your arrival, and your time here, goes as smoothly as possible.

We hope to be seeing you very soon!

Regards

Christine Dewsnap
Volunteer Coordinator for Kuti Ranch

Introduction and Preparation

Malawi

'The Warm Heart of Africa', Malawi gained its independence in 1964, previously being a British Protectorate known as Nyasaland. It is located to the east of Zambia and also shares its borders with Mozambique and Tanzania. Its total area is approximately 118,500km², which includes its adjacent lake, Lake Nyasa, more commonly known as Lake Malawi. Its population is estimated at 14,268,711, although this is greatly affected by high mortality caused by HIV/AIDS. The population is made up of at least 11 ethnic groups, including Asians and Europeans, with Christianity and Muslim being the prominent religions. Chichewa is the national language.

Malawi has two seasons in the year. The wet season from November till May, and the dry season, which covers the rest of the year. The land is used mostly for agricultural purposes (most notably for tobacco and maize), as well as mining for coal. Because of this, Malawi's environment suffers greatly from deforestation and land degradation. At one stage, less than a century ago, it was not uncommon to encounter many animals, including leopard and hyena, even around the main city of Lilongwe. Today most of these animals are long gone and the only chance many people have of seeing them is in a zoo outside the country or in cages or as skins within the country.

Kuti

Kuti Community Wildlife Ranch is trying to change this. The ex- cattle ranch consists of 3,000 hectares of fenced land encompassing habitat ranging from forest, to grassland, to wetland and is a non-profit organisation run by private volunteers and supported by the local Malawian community surrounding the park. Kuti offers the opportunity for local and international visitors to come on a uniquely Malawian wildlife viewing experience. The vision for Kuti is to create a completely self-sustaining enterprise that is focussed solely on the animals and their environment alongside the community, as well as promoting awareness to their plight within Malawi.

Kuti began bringing in animals in 2001 and in just under a decade has had great success, with the numbers steadily increasing. Currently Kuti has approximately 55 zebra, 14 blue wildebeest, 60+ impala, 34 nyala, 14 sable, 11 waterbuck, 20+ kudu, 2 giraffe and many other locally existing species such as warthog, duiker, python, vervet monkey, baboon and genets as well as plentiful bird life.

The most important part of Kuti is making sure that the park remains accessible at all times to encourage visitors to come and stay so that they can take away special memories of the wildlife and the habitat to create a positive connection with the environment and conservation.

Preparation for your trip

Brief Checklist

- Book flights
- Visit your doctor to arrange any medical necessities
- Check your passport
- Apply for a visa
- Arrange travel insurance
- Arrange currency
- Make sure all payments are complete and place is secured

Booking Flights

Be sure to book your flights as early as possible in order to get the best fares and availability. Make sure to check out plenty of options both on the internet and at travel agents. We request that you arrive at Lilongwe International Airport (LLW) in the morning or early afternoon to make sure that we reach our destination before dark.

There are several airlines that fly into Malawi and some are more frequent than others. Suggested airlines are South African, Kenyan/KLM and Ethiopian. The trip to Lilongwe will require a stop at another destination, which will vary depending on your flight and carrier, so be sure to keep an eye on your arrival and departure times and also to choose somewhere you are comfortable to be in relation to your length of stay (some transits in Ethiopia can be overnight).

You may also decide to stay longer in the country after your trip to Kuti so be sure to account for this in any visas and flight planning. There are many hotels along the lake shore that you can visit and also many other breathtaking areas in Malawi that you can experience, not to mention some of the excellent and fairly priced camping safaris that can be taken internationally from Lilongwe city (Zambia, Tanzania, etc.).

Medical

As with visiting many other countries worldwide it is important to make sure all your medical necessities are covered before travelling to Malawi. You should visit your doctor in plenty of time before your departure as some recommended immunisations may be required to be administered in a series of injections over several weeks, so it is important to have plenty of time set aside. Although you will be working in a game ranch, direct contact with the wildlife will ideally be a distinct “hands-off” policy, so this should not be a major concern.

Some immunisations are still highly recommended. We ask that all volunteers have the following:

- Hepatitis A
- Hepatitis B
- Typhoid

- Diphtheria
- Tetanus
- A course of malaria prophylaxis

Please be aware that malaria is rife in Malawi and malaria medication, as well as a good awareness of the disease and its symptoms, is extremely important. Rabies immunisation is optional and left up to your personal discretion.

There is a hospital close to the site of Kuti Wildlife Ranch for any emergencies, as well as basic first aid kits on site. Although every effort is made to ensure that clean and new instruments are used you may wish to purchase an emergency first aid kit prior to travel that includes personal sterile needles, so that you may have peace of mind over your health.

As an aside, we strongly ask volunteers to remember the problems Malawi has with HIV/AIDS and to be accordingly careful in all interactions.

Passports and Visas

Before you travel it's important to make sure you have your passports and visas in order. Your passport is required to be valid for at least six months before the date of travel. Part of the entry requirements is a return or onward ticket from Malawi. Most nations do not require a visa to enter the country unless they intend to stay for longer than thirty (30) days. It is possible to extend this to three months at a small cost while still inside the country, should you wish to extend your stay once you are here. It is recommended that you double check your personal visa requirements as they may change and fluctuate without warning. Don't forget to make photocopies of your passport and any other important travel documents before leaving for security reasons.

Insurance

It is essential to have at least basic travel insurance when you travel. This will not only give you peace of mind with regard to your flights, it will also be important should any medical problems arise. It is up to you which insurance you choose; however, the volunteer coordinator at Kuti **MUST** have some form of confirmation of your insurance policy (number and company) prior to your travel. Without this your place may be offered to another applicant. Further important details will be collected upon your arrival at Kuti for use in the event of necessary medical treatment.

Currency

The currency of Malawi is the Malawian Kwacha. The exchange rate is constantly fluctuating so be sure to check the appropriate rates before you exchange your money. It is recommended that you bring cash with you to the park as ATMs are scarce and sometimes offline. Some larger companies will accept FOREX, particularly US Dollars and some areas in the city, including the airport, have FOREX bureaus. There are very few shops that accept debit or credit cards due to lack of appropriate

equipment. Time may be allowed if necessary before travelling to Kuti to make sure you have all the currency you need.

Payment to Kuti

The cost of volunteering at Kuti is €25 per day. This covers airport transfer to and from the ranch, accommodation and food. Your initial, non-refundable, deposit will be 10% of your overall payment, if you wish to continue with your application, and can be paid through a PayPal account. The remaining balance **MUST** be paid in full two weeks prior to your departure and will be the final security for your place. This can also be paid by PayPal or through bank transfer.

Packing for your Trip

Some of the clothing that you choose to pack will depend on the time of year you will be visiting Kuti. Be sure to take note of whether you will be travelling during the rainy or dry season. Here is a list of clothing and other essentials we feel will be appropriate regardless of time of year.

- Closed shoes for working and walking around the park
- Sandals or flip-flops for relaxing in the evening
- Appropriate light clothing for working during the day
- Comfortable clothing for the evening (including a sweater)
- Clothing for travelling into town - although women are no longer required to wear skirts in Malawi, it is suggested that dress should be fairly conservative and respectful of the culture. T-shirts, shorts, singlets, trousers and sweaters are recommended
- Sunglasses
- A cap or hat
- Sleeping bag - designed for warm climate
- Bath towels
- Your own mosquito net – all accommodation is gauze netted against mosquitoes but if you wish to bring you own net you are welcome to do so
- Mosquito repellent - this is **HIGHLY** important
- Padlocks to protect your belongings
- Torch
- Plug adaptors if necessary - Malawi uses the standard British plugs
- Portable water bottle
- Personal toiletries
- Personal medication
- First Aid Kit - including sun cream, pain killers, antiseptics, plasters, etc
- Any other personal items you wish to bring

Arriving at Kuti

On arriving at Lilongwe International Airport you will be picked up by our volunteer coordinator and travel directly to Kuti.

On arriving at Kuti you will be shown to your accommodation and have time to settle in. In the evening you will then receive a presentation about Kuti, its area, what you will be doing there, basic risk assessment and important emergency information. You will also be introduced to the different people operating at Kuti that you will be working with. From here you will receive a brief overview of your tasks during your stay, having a social evening to relax before you start working. The following day will consist of a morning group tour around the park to situate yourselves and see what Kuti has to offer. The afternoon will then be spent learning about your tasks, what work needs to be done and what your role will be.

Accommodation

Volunteer accommodation is provided in the form of 4 brick, multi-room houses situated in the office area of the ranch. Each house has its own toilet and shower facilities, with warm water showers heated by a boiler. All houses also have their own kitchen and lounge areas for socialising. Each bedroom has up to two wooden frame beds with mattresses. Bedding provided is simple; a base sheet and pillow with case and some top blankets. You are welcome to bring your own sleeping bag. There are electrical outlets where you can charge mobile phones and cameras that are powered by solar panels.

There is a large bar area where you can sit and relax and order a few drinks or read a book. The animals are quite often seen walking through this area, especially the zebra, so it can provide good viewing opportunities. There is a small kitchen and a BBQ area next to the bar where you can also cook food. Groceries can be bought in the local town of Salima. It is recommended that tap water should be boiled and sterilised before use, and bottled water is available for drinking at the bar.

Transport will be provided in the form of bicycles and these will be used by volunteers to get around the park. Once every 10 days the volunteer coordinator will visit Kuti and facilitate grocery shopping trips to Salima and any other work that requires the use of the car.

Your Role at Kuti

At the end of the day everyone at Kuti is there to help. There is an important work structure at Kuti that needs to be followed in order to make sure that the work carried out runs as smoothly and efficiently as possible. The structure consists of two long-term interns working at Kuti alongside the local managers and employees to oversee the running of Kuti on a day to day basis; several mid-term placement volunteers who will be looking after individual task projects around Kuti; and the short-term visitors who will be assisting in completing the current tasks around the park. At Kuti we feel it is important for everyone to know that regardless of their term of stay, each person is a valuable member of the group and that everyone will be treated equally.

Obviously it is hard to say exactly what jobs you will be doing during your stay at Kuti as this will change in regard to the time of year and what projects are currently being undertaken. But here is a short list to give you some idea of the work you may be asked to do:

- Fence maintenance
- Road maintenance
- Grass cutting along the roads
- Helping complete chalet construction
- Bore-hole maintenance
- Looking after tourists and visitors
- Acting as a guide for some tourists and visitors
- Assisting with cattle management
- Vegetation assessment
- Trail construction and maintenance

Please see the accompanying list for current projects underway at Kuti.

In October there will be an opportunity to assist with a game count around the park and throughout the year there should be opportunities to assist in some research on the populations of the various species in the park. We are also open to volunteers conducting their own research. If you wish to do this let us know what you would like to research and please remember that we have no scientific equipment at the ranch so you would be required to provide your own.

Disclaimer

Please remember that, as this is Africa, projects may change and conditions may vary. We ask that volunteers be prepared to face the challenges of living out in the African bush. These include, and are not limited to: water problems; electricity problems and blackouts; frequent schedule changes and sometimes slow moving work. We hope that these can be seen as exciting challenges to be tackled and overcome with a positive attitude and contribute to the learning experience.

Contact

If you have any further questions please don't hesitate to get in touch with us and we will do our best to answer any of your queries.

Email: volunteer.kuti@gmail.com

Phone: +265 999 003 162