

FRIENDS OF NAMUNCHA

Volunteering in Namuncha

Opportunities for doing volunteer work in a rural Kenyan Maasai
community



Friends of Namuncha
20/11/2019

There are many opportunities to volunteer in this change ready Maasai community in the Rift Valley in Kenya.

There follows a description of our first volunteer who came to teach in both primary and secondary schools and to enhance the after school activities.

There are other opportunities from maintenance to building and help with data collection and collation. Community education in nutrition, agricultural practice, enterprise solutions and so on.

The Namuncha community is sitting on the brink of what they term, "catching up with the modern world" whilst retaining what is important in their culture.

If any of this interests you please get in touch with Frank (as in the rest of the leaflet, or Arthur Hibble the chair of the trustees, at ncspuk@gmail.com

If you have a particular skill that you feel could be developed on this community please e mail me at ncspuk@gmail.com

We have a dry stone wall programme, a motor cycle repair workshop, a small business skills workshop, and planning a fine textile weaving workshop.

Arthur Hibble
Chair of the Trustees, Friends of Namuncha, (formerly the Namuncha Community Schools Project)

October 2019

Teaching at Namuncha

So, you're thinking about, planning or committed to a teaching adventure to Kenya with our boys and girls at Namuncha School. Thank you for being so generous with your time. You are making the lives of a community with very little, infinitely better. I am so excited for you!



The purpose of this is to give you an idea of what to expect from someone who also volunteered at the school.

I'm Frank. I was 21 when my adventure began. Kenya was the first stop on a post-uni gap year. I arrived at the school in August 2018 and remained with there until mid October the same year.



Firstly, and most importantly, you will have something to offer the school. It was a concern of mine that my skills would not be beneficial or I wouldn't be able to effectively teach. That simply is not true. I taught Geography, English, ICT, Art and in the afternoons would take a games session. I brought a bag full of old sports equipment and 100 tennis balls for them. Little things that they had never experienced before. It was delightful seeing them screaming with excitement every afternoon as the balls were launched into the air for them to play.

My advice would be to focus on something you yourself enjoy and be equipped and ready to take that passion to as many kids as possible. For me that was sports and art. The tennis balls were inclusive across the age groups. I also took 3 packs of coloured chalks which allowed for creative and busy art classes. Be prepared to both teach and learn.



Whilst taking physical items is great, knowledge and skills are important too. Arthur and Charlotte (the charity founders) came out whilst I was at Namuncha. We taught locals how to build dry stone walls. As a result, Elijah has started his own business constructing them for the community. During my last 2 weeks I painted some murals for the school. Now almost every wall is decorated with similar educational murals.

Talk through your ideas with the teachers at the school and all of us at the charity. We are here to help you make the most of your time at the school and maximise the exchange of knowledge.

Food and Accommodation

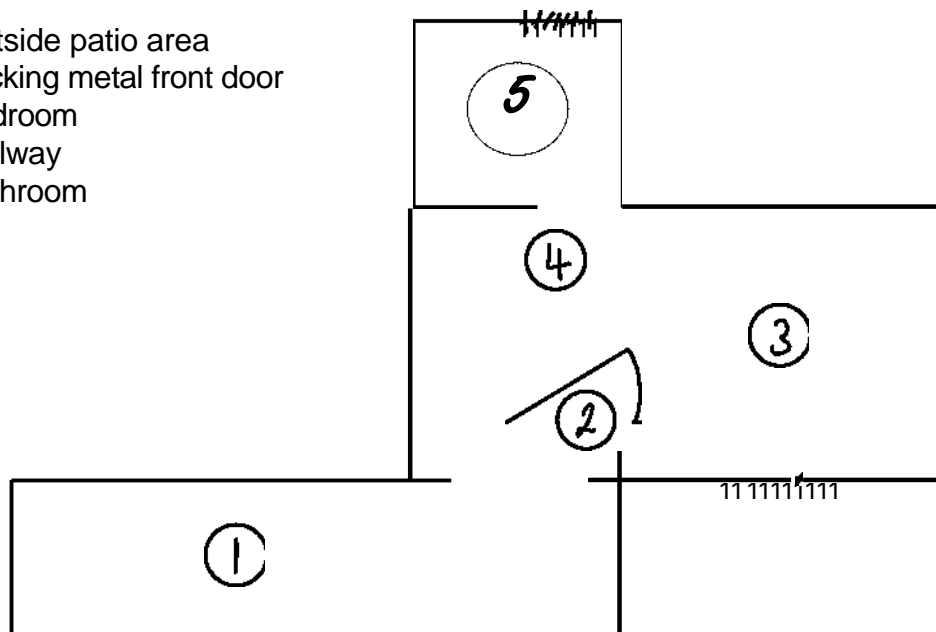
I highly recommend staying on the school site. Fenced off, the area is very secure with a local market only a 5 minute walk away for basic supplies. The teachers that also stay on the site will make sure you are comfortable and well fed.

Most nights we would walk to the village, purchase food and cook together. There is a supermarket in Mai Mahiu which is a 30 minute bush motorbike taxi away and resupply missions can be run most weekends for a larger selection of food. Teachers commute from those areas most days, so it can be arranged to get medication and other items quickly as needed.

Lunch at the school is simply boiled maize and kidney beans every day. Some salt and the occasional avocado broke up the monotony for me. Get a few to share with the other teachers and they will love you forever. I have heard of this meal not sitting well with people's stomachs and I did experience this for the last two weeks of my time there. Don't be afraid to ask for help. I would take lunch back at my house and cook some pasta instead.

The house I stayed in had a bathroom and bedroom unfurnished (I believe there may be a bed in there now) and the building has no power or running water, but a flushing toilet. Outside, there was a tap which fed from the school's water tank. This worked intermittently. My neighbours gave me water tanks to store as much as I could. In the morning I would boil a pot of water for a shower. The gas stove should still be in the building. There was an abundance of space for just me. Bring a mosquito net!

1. Outside patio area
2. Locking metal front door
3. Bedroom
4. Hallway
5. Bathroom





Fresh food available 5 minutes from the school

What to wear?

It's hot and dusty during the day, but can rain and blow cold winds in the evening. Basic clothing, long trousers, a jumper and rain coat will suit you fine. The kids play barefoot, but I would recommend some old trainers for school time and some walking boots as there are some cool hikes.

Everything you might need can be bought at Mai Mahiu. However sun cream was not available. Take enough for your time there as I couldn't find any until Nairobi.

Phone, Money and Internet

Safaricom is the main phone provider in Kenya. They operate a system called M-pesa which basically ties a bank account to your phone allowing you to buy plans, send money, purchase goods and withdraw/deposit cash from stores across the country. M-pesa is very popular and used almost everywhere. A must have. Do not rely completely on them. The system would fail, but most of the time it was fantastic. The school had no WiFi so I used the data plans which allowed me to browse and video chat with family back home easily and cheaply.

Transport

Uber is common in Kenya. You should easily be able to get a ride from the airport to somewhere in Nairobi and around the city. Matatus are brightly coloured vans or trucks that blast music and ferry passengers stuffed in the back longer distances from cities outwards. Easy to take, Alex taught me how to use them, and being white the local people want you to have a good experience of their country and are kind and helpful. You'll soon be led to the right van through all the mayhem.

Motorbikes are used more commonly to ferry passengers around. Fast, cheap, fun, and dangerous. Checks are minimal for riders which can mean they have as much idea about riding as you. I would avoid them in the city with the traffic, but I used them multiple times to get to and from the school. Stick to their use around Namuncha and ride with the staff where possible, they are the most experienced. If you can I would advise taking a motorbike helmet.

Trains now run from Namuncha to Nairobi and outwards. I took one to Mombasa. Built by the Chinese they are clean, efficient and very safe. A fantastic method for those long haul journeys.

Any question no matter how silly you may think they are get in touch:

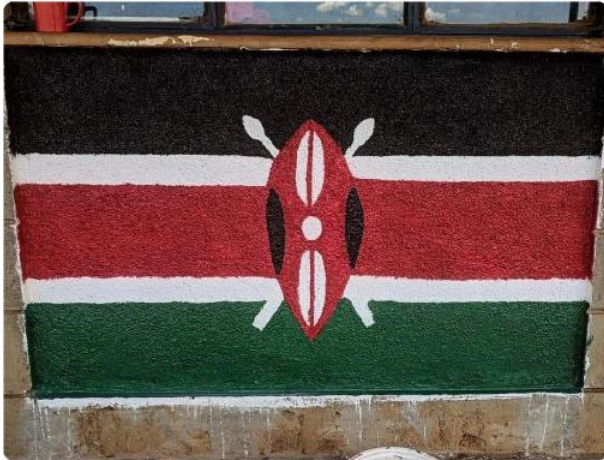
Frank Huffer 07769 183570 frank.huffer18@gmail.com (probably the best shout),

I'd love to buy you a drink and get to know more about what you plan for Namuncha so get in touch.









The time to acquire a local recognition of a professional qualification is beyond the time line of most volunteers. This certainly applies to most clinical practitioners. However, there are many other opportunities to apply knowledge and skills that will benefit the community.

Clinical Data collation and analysis for use by local clinicians and the community health board. At the moment it is paper based in a series of registers.

Teaching in both schools on subject specialty and English Language training.

Art and design classes

Music classes

Property maintenance for those who love painting and resurfacing concrete floors

Visual Acuity screening for the whole school and setting up a rolling entry screening programme.

Taking forward research into air pollution in the huts and monitoring breath CO levels in children and pregnant women.

Sporting activities.

And many others where you might have talent and or enthusiasm.

Arthur Hibble
Chair of Trustees.

