

## Pre-immersion Guide

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## Welcome

Congratulations on your decision to participate in *Into the Heart!*

This pre-travel document will provide you with some guidelines and helpful tips to best help you prepare for your immersion trip.

## What your registration covers

The registration amount is designed to cover costs of your participation and includes:

- All accommodation for the duration of the immersion
- All meals including 2 nights eating out at restaurants in Nairobi (excluding alcoholic beverages)
- All costs associated with the Amboseli National Park experience – transfer, game-park tours, accommodation and meals
- Airport transfers in Kenya and Uganda
- Transportation throughout the immersion – Kenya and Uganda
- Travel insurance for the duration of the immersion
- Into the Heart* shirt
- Local and Australian guides

Registration does not include return travel to and from Australia.

Any additional travel arrangements outside of the official itinerary are not the responsibility of ERFA and are not covered by ERFA's insurance policy. Participants will need to make their own arrangements for these if required.

## Your travel

You will need to book flights from Australia to Kenya and returning from Uganda to Australia. **It is extremely important you keep to the suggested arrival (Kenya) and departure (Uganda) times.** We recommend you utilise ERFA's travel agent who is very experienced with our immersion requirements but you are welcome to use your own. Our agent's details are:

Cayla Gibson, Senior Consultant, Flight Centre, Queensland

Telephone: 07 3083 0600

Email: [Cayla.gibson@flightcentre.com.au](mailto:Cayla.gibson@flightcentre.com.au)

**The arrival and departure times are critical to program logistics and participation. If you have any queries on these, please contact ERFA.**

You will need to **depart Australia latest on Saturday 7 September 2024.** The flight options for travel departing Brisbane, are listed over the page. If you wish to depart from a city other than Brisbane, Cayla will be able to assist with a personalised travel plan, that allows you to arrive and depart at the required times. Please note that flight prices are subject to regular change.

Date	Airline	Flight No	Cabin	Depart	From	Arrive	At	Duration	Transit
Sat, 7 Sept	Emirates	435	Economy	21:00	Brisbane Intl Airport (BNE)	5:10 (on the 8 Sept)	Dubai Intl Airport (DXB)	14h 10m	5h 5m
Sun, 8 Sept	Emirates	719	Economy	10:15	Dubai Intl Airport (DXB)	14:15	Nairobi Jomo Kenyatta Intl Airport (NBO)	5h 0m	-
Sun, 15 Sept	Kenya Airlines	420	Economy	7:45	Nairobi Jomo Kenyatta Intl Airport (NBO)	9:05	Entebbe Airport (EBB)	1h 20m	-
Wed, 18 Sept	Emirates	730	Economy	16:25	Entebbe Airport (EBB)	22:50	Dubai Intl Airport (DXB)	5h 25m	3h 40m
Thu, 19 Sept	Emirates	430	Economy	2:30	Dubai Intl Airport (DXB)	22:20	Brisbane Intl Airport (BNE)	13h 50m	-

## As you prepare

In the time leading up to your departure, try immersing yourself in the destination country. Google, Wikipedia and endless other online resources can help you. Study maps, learn the demographics, read about the political and cultural history, sub-cultures, tribes, inspirational leaders and personalities from that area.

YouTube will most likely have the personal travelogues of others who have been there. None of this will give you the experience of being there but it will begin your adjustment to that place. ERFA's website has information on partner projects [www.erf.org.au](http://www.erf.org.au)

## Vaccinations & Medical

You will need to visit your travel doctor and obtain medical advice on the vaccinations and medical supplies you will need for your trip. Please note that, if required, there are good chemists and doctors close to our accommodation in Nairobi.

It is a mandatory requirement of the Australian Government to have a **Yellow Fever Vaccination** booklet – as proof of your yellow fever vaccination – before you leave. It is recommended that you have an international **COVID-19 vaccination certificate** as you may be asked to present this when entering Kenya. The Yellow fever vaccination booklet will be required for re-entering Australia.

Other vaccinations that may be recommended include the following (this is up to you and your doctor and is not medical advice):

- Updates on tetanus, polio, whooping cough
- Cholera
- Rabies
- Hepatitis C
- Hepatitis A
- Typhoid
- Updates on Measles, mumps, rubella

You will also need malaria medication for locations within Kenya and Uganda. There are a range of options, which you can discuss with your doctor.

You may wish to take some antibiotics in case you get an upset stomach (which is quite common).

Other over the counter medicines you may like to take include:

- Immodium
- Gastrolyte or Hydralyte for dehydration
- Panadol/Ibuprofen

## Passport

It is important that your passport is up-to-date and valid for **at least 6 months** following your return from Africa.

## Visa Application

Getting the required entry authorisations and visas for Kenya and Uganda is a 2-step process.

### Kenya

Although it is not technically a visa that is required to enter Kenya, you are required to have what is known as an **Electronic Travel Authorisation (eTA)** from the Kenyan government's Directorate of Immigration & Citizen Services.

This is an online process at: <https://www.etakenya.go.ke/en>

Details of when and how to apply for the electronic entry including FAQs can be found here: <https://www.etakenya.go.ke/en>

The website recommends applying for the eTA at least 2 weeks prior to travel, noting that it is valid for 90 days.

In order to complete this process you will need:

- Valid passport
- Recent passport picture OR a selfie picture taken during application process
- Contact details (home address, telephone, email)
- Travel information and flight itinerary (arrival flight number, date of departure of initial flight in case of connecting flights)
- Proof of booking for the hotel you will be staying at
- Yellow fever vaccination certificate
- Credit/Debit card information for payment, if applicable

### Uganda

For Uganda you will require a Ugandan Tourist Visa – Single Entry

Visa Approval Authorisation validity is 90 days from the day of approval. Visas are available online through the Immigration portal: <https://www.visas.immigration.go.ug/#/apply>

Required attachments for tourism visa:

- Passport copy (bio-data page) with at least 6 months validity
- Tour plan
- Travel itinerary / booking
- Recent Passport-size Photograph
- Vaccination Certificate (Yellow Fever)
- Hotel booking or reservation (if any other accommodation, provide an address)

Entry requirement and visa application details concerning accommodation in Kenya and Uganda will be provided by ERFA in a detailed itinerary in the very near future.

## Travel Insurance

Edmund Rice Foundation (Australia) will provide insurance cover for your immersion. To ensure the correct cover is provided a copy of your flight itinerary is to be provided to us. If you require specific details of insurance please contact us.

## Information from Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade (DFAT)

We recommend that you visit [Smartraveller.gov.au](https://smartraveller.gov.au) prior to your departure for Australian Government information on travel to Kenya and Uganda.

## Accommodation

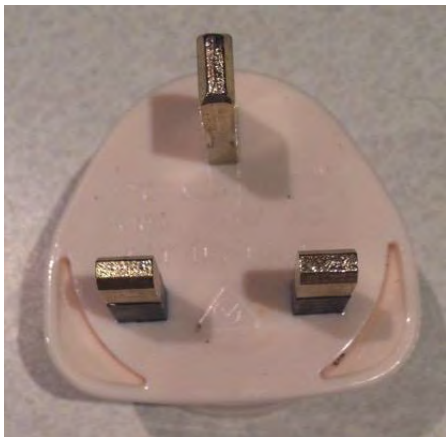
During your stay in Nairobi you will stay at the Mary Ward Centre, Karen, Nairobi. This is basic accommodation. All rooms have a single bed with tiled floor and ensuite, including shower and toilet. All rooms have power and some have access to the Wifi service.

## Wifi

You have reasonable wifi at the Mary Ward Centre, but at peak times expect it to be slow. You can get access in the main public areas, and in some rooms. Wifi is also available in some of the cafes that you visit and is usually free.

## Adapters

Kenya power adapters are UK adapters and look like this:



*Figure 1 Kenya power Adapter*

Safety High levels of unemployment and poverty lead to issues with theft and safety. When walking around, ensure you dress appropriately (i.e. minimal, non-flashy jewellery) and do not display expensive equipment (i.e. keep cameras out of sight etc.). Don't bring valuables unnecessarily into the communities (i.e. passport). Carry minimal amounts of cash and keep it hidden. You can familiarize yourself with ERFA's Safety and Security Policy here: <https://erf.org.au/app/uploads/2023/08/Safety-Security-Policy.pdf>

## Money Matters

There is no need to take travelers cheques or US dollars with you. There are ATMs available to withdraw local currency, when arriving in the country. This will work if your bankcard is connected to the Visa or Cirrus network. Notify your bank of your travel dates before you travel so they don't freeze your account when an international withdrawal occurs.

US dollars can be exchanged for local currency if you have them. However Kenyan Shillings are not well accepted once you leave Kenya.

## Shopping

There are supermarkets in nearby Karen where you will be able to purchase most grocery items. There are also local markets that you will be able to visit. Many partner projects produce and sell small gift items and we encourage support of these with small amounts of cash.

## Phones

Your team leaders will have mobile phones with local SIM cards. You can check with your own provider before departure about options.

## What to Pack

- 3-4 pairs of pants (cargo type pants that are quick drying are great – please note that shorts are not suitable for visits to the slums)
- 4-5 shirts (t shirts/polo shirts/ light weight shirts)
- 3 shorts (for Edmund Rice Camp)
- Underwear
- Swimwear
- Socks
- 2-3 pairs of comfortable shoes (runners/hiking boots) - you will be doing a lot of walking and sometimes in slightly unsavoury places. An old pair of runners that you are happy to leave behind is ideal.
- 1 Hat
- 1-2 pullovers (it can be quite cool at night)
- Pyjamas
- 2-3 Smart casual outfits for going out to dinner
- Sunscreen
- Insect repellent, or even plug-in device for nighttime
- Hand sanitizer
- Toiletries
- Camera/Go Pro/iPad
- 1 overnight bag which can double for safari weekend luggage/ carry on luggage
- 1 Pair of good shoes/boots for semi-formal occasions

\* Laundry can be done at a cost a couple of times while you are away, however you may need to handwash some items.

## Gifts for Schools

There is a lot of need in Kenya and if you want to take gifts for the schools here are some suggestions:

- Books
- Pens/pencils/crayons
- Art supplies
- Sports equipment (soccer balls are a popular item), skipping ropes
- Small toys
- Second hand musical instruments for schools

It is very difficult to send things to Kenya as they pay tax (and potentially bribes) to get things through customs. You can easily pack items but freight has its challenges.

## Duty free alcohol

You are allowed 1 litre of alcohol per person over the age of 18.

## Checklist

<b>✓</b>	<b>Item / Description</b>
	Passport
	Visa
	Additional Insurance Cover – for travel outside immersion dates if required
	Yellow Fever Immunisation – and certificate
	COVID-19 international vaccination certificate
	Medications including anti-malaria



## **Guide for Immersions in Developing Countries (for travellers, workers & program participants)**

Tim Galbally – Counselling Psychologist - Melbourne

***The aim of this guide is to help you get the best from your trip and ensure it contributes to your personal and professional development. The practical exercises will help you develop psychological and emotional well-being and awareness.***

When you visit a foreign country, the way you react will be influenced by your personality, your past experiences and the mental and emotional state you are in at the time. As you immerse yourself into a new culture, you bring your unique hopes and expectations and your own preferred ways of coping and your unique intelligence to that situation. In addition to your individuality you also have a lot in common with your fellow travellers and workers and also with the inhabitants of the country you are visiting. There are many things you can do to take good care of yourself and others while on your journey.

### **Express Yourself**

Writing is a great way of defining and distilling your thoughts and feelings. Talking is a good way to do that too. In fact, expressing yourself thoughtfully is generally good for your well-being and development. When you travel to a foreign country your senses, mind and emotions have a huge amount of new information to process. Keep a journal and talk to others before, during and after your trip. This will help you stay more balanced and aware.

- *Take a moment now to write a brief assessment of your current life situation. How are your relationships, your home life, your work, family, friends, your relationship with your body, possessions etc? This is for your eyes only....just a brief stocktake of your life before the journey.*

### **Expectations**

What you expect of a new situation, will influence your experience of that situation when it happens. Asking questions about the journey, expressing your expectations and researching the destination country are useful ways to ensure that your expectations are reasonable. Realistic expectations will build your capacity to enjoy the journey and feel resilient throughout.

- *Write down what you are hoping to get out of this trip. What do you want to occur? How would you like it to influence your life? How would you like it to influence others?*

### **During the weeks prior to your journey .....**

Try immersing yourself in the destination country before you go. Google, Wikipedia and endless other online resources can help you study maps, learn the demographics, read about the political and cultural history, subcultures, tribes, inspirational leaders and personalities from that place. You Tube will most likely have the personal travelogues of others who have been there. None of this will give you the experience of being there but it will begin your adjustment to that place.

- *Research your destination country well before you intend to travel*

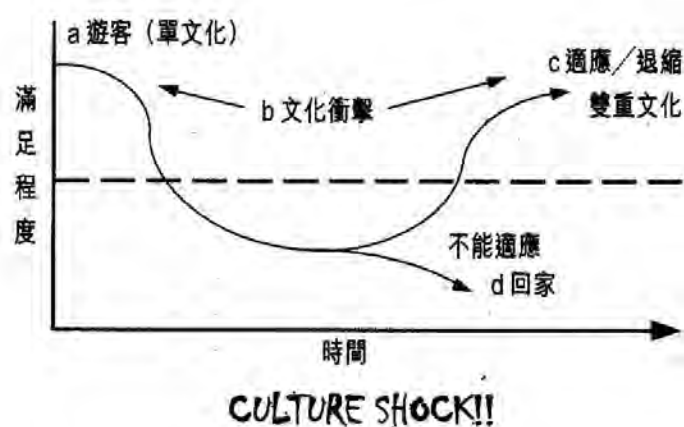


### Adjusting to a foreign country

Immersing yourself into a new culture is an enriching experience which can also, simply by contrast, give you a fresh appreciation and insight into your own culture. All of this can result in a very positive, life-altering experience.

However, immersion into a foreign culture can be a shock to a person who has lived mostly in their home country. Big differences between cultures can make it difficult to adjust to new surroundings. The strangeness of a new country, the differences in behaviours, customs, weather and food require some adjustment. Add to that the impact of witnessing poverty first-hand and the recognition of disparities in health, welfare, work and life opportunities. Such impressions can be overwhelming for visitors to a poor country and can result in deep sadness, anger, disbelief, anxiety, depression, withdrawal and strong urges to go home.

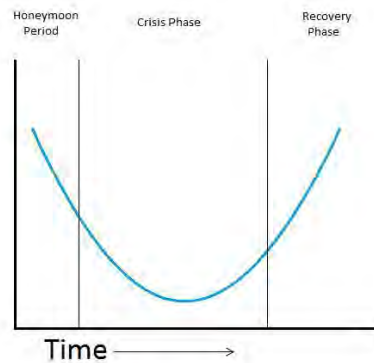
Over the years much has been written about 'culture shock'. While it is not a clinical condition, it does describe the experiences that many people have when they immerse themselves in a foreign culture, particularly if that environment has extreme aspects. In addition to the symptoms mentioned in the last paragraph, culture shock can also lead to difficulties concentrating, feelings of rejection, frustration and also a tendency to develop negative and simplistic views of the new culture.



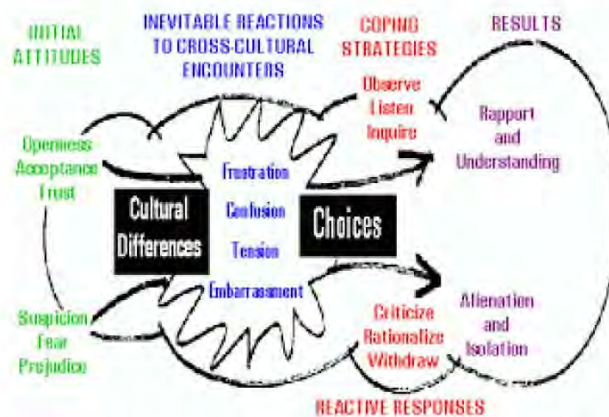
You may or may not experience such symptoms, but you will most certainly experience some kind of psychological, emotional and physical 'adjustment' to the foreign country. If you have good self-awareness and/or are journaling your experiences, you may detect that you go through 'stages' of reactions.

Some researchers have described stages of cultural adjustment as Honeymoon, Crisis and Recovery Stages. Arriving in a new country people often experience feelings of exhilaration, excitement and optimism. Differences between cultures are either not yet evident or they are seen as exciting and exotic. This Honeymoon stage is often the first stage of relationships. It's often followed by a crisis stage where reality sets in and differences between cultures feel frustrating and one can feel like an outsider. This is the stage where people feel the painful brunt of the cultural adjustment. The latter stage of Recovery occurs when people develop more comfort and peace in the new environment. This allows for

a more balanced perspective and helps with the longer term process of integrating the experiences of both cultures into one worldview.



The purpose of describing these stages is to help you *be patient with your reactions and mood-states*. It's usually not a good idea to make big decisions when you are having strong emotions. Let time pass. Emotions are transient and you will soon feel something different. If you stay calm, observe and learn, and keep things in perspective, you will probably find that difficult stages will pass. If you are really concerned about yourself, speak to a trusted confidante and your manager/leader.



During the period of 'cultural adjustment' some people may be tempted to withdraw from associating with the new culture and cling to the company of familiar Westerners. Try to stay open to the new culture. Perhaps develop little routines as you gradually adjust to the new environment. As you find little ways to connect with the community around you, you will feel less like a foreigner and more comfortable in your own skin.

*More ways to minimize the effects of Culture Shock:*

- Allow time for personal reflection
- Share your feelings and experiences with others
- Create a comfortable structured routine for a while
- Practice mindfulness. Focus on your senses rather than on your thoughts

### **Different is not Wrong**

There's a concept known as 'ethnocentrism' which is the belief that one's own way of life or culture is superior to others. Remember, culture does not just describe the things around us, it also includes our own beliefs, our habits and our values. It's natural to see our own culture as 'normal' because that is the one we know well, the one we have assumed throughout our life. But take care that you don't judge another culture as wrong or naive simply because it is different to your own. For instance, in some cultures when someone is ill, they will go to the local shaman before they visit a medical doctor. This might seem strange to Westerners but it derives from deeply held beliefs and values that we should not judge lightly, nor even expect to understand.

Similarly, many indigenous cultures have a very different attitude to 'time' compared to Westerners. We might mistake them for being uncaring or lazy due to their apparent irreverence for punctuality. This difference derives from deeply divergent cultural backgrounds. It's better to assume that their laid-back attitude towards time is a difference that can teach us a lot, if we are open to learning rather than judging. When in doubt ..... be humble.

- *Keep a list of fundamental differences that you observe between your culture and the culture of the country that you are visiting. You might admire some characteristics or be irritated by some. Whatever your reaction, you are observing natural differences.*

### **Prepare to be Stereotyped**

Whether you like it or not, if you are white-skinned you will be seen as a stereotype of white & wealthy. No matter what your personal situation is at home, you will likely be viewed as having a lot of money. Their perception of you as rich is entirely accurate. In this developing country most of the inhabitants live below the poverty line. You may be called 'Mzungu' and you may be asked for money and favours and your contact details may be sought by some. This might feel distressing to you. You might think you are being treated unfairly. Just remember, this phenomenon occurs because you are at the conjunction of disparate worlds. One is exceedingly rich and the other is exceedingly poor. If you stay open and connected to this new culture, you might appreciate this as an opportunity to learn something about our world which allows such inequality to endure. In any case though, you will need to look after yourself in these situations. You will need to set your own boundaries around what you give and how you deal with the situations that arise. Sharing your experiences and thoughts with others may help you work through some of these issues.

- *Discuss with your peers and leaders how you deal with requests for money or personal details. Can you think of a policy for dealing with these situations that feels right for you?*

### **Humility is Wisdom**

Have you ever noticed that the more you get to know a subject, the more complex it becomes? You begin to see grey areas and subtle nuance in what at first seemed obvious and clear. The idea that we can 'know' something when we have only had limited exposure to it .... is arrogance. As we immerse ourselves in a new culture, it is wise to stay humble and open-minded because so often we discover layers of complexity, detail and meaning that we first had not considered. Just as it seems an unfair generalisation for you to be labelled white & wealthy, so it is that your initial stereotypes of people in developing countries are likely to mature into more comprehensive appreciations of them.

- *If some Westerners are stereotyped as white & wealthy, what stereotypes do Westerners create of people in developing countries? Can you detect the ways you stereotype others?*

### **Just before you return home .....**

Returning home to loved-ones can sometimes be challenging. You will want them to appreciate what you have been through in your travels, but you may struggle to communicate what you have experienced. Here are two exercises you can try in order to make re-entry a little easier.

Before you travel home, write a note/letter to your most trusted confidante at home. You won't be sending this letter as is, so don't try to write it well. The purpose of the letter is simply to 'vent' your thoughts and feelings without editing anything. The goal in this letter is to tell the raw truth of how you are feeling / what the trip was like / how it has affected you / what you have learned / how have you changed etc. Unload everything in a loose stream-of-consciousness style. When you have nothing more to say, just leave it aside for a few hours. Later, when you read it back, imagine you are the person you have written to i.e. your trusted confidante. How do you imagine they would respond to what you have written? This exercise is designed to do three things. It may help to release pent-up emotions. It may help you to define and distil the experience of your trip. It may also help you to find good ways of expressing yourself to your family and friends when you go home. If you decide you want to send the letter, alter it according to what you think will work best for that recipient.

Another good exercise is to write an Elevator Pitch that you can use to communicate your story to people back home. An Elevator Pitch is a very brief statement which conveys the story of your trip and its effect on you. You can't and won't want to tell everybody your full story when you get back home. This Elevator Pitch is a simple way of dealing with the majority of interactions you will have with others when there just isn't enough time or motivation to go deep into the story.

- *Write a 'venting' letter to your closest confidant .....but only send it after due consideration.*
- *Construct an Elevator Pitch*

### **When you return:**

The transition back to your home country may present you with an array of challenges. Some researchers describe a condition called 'reverse culture shock'. The immediate return to your home may be exciting, even euphoric. But the initial excitement can give way to a more flat mood as you try to integrate the overseas experience with your home-life. It may at times be a struggle to communicate the totality of your overseas experience to your friends. Some people won't be interested anyway. On top of that, you have to deal with the day to day trivialities of your life while you are still trying to process the big experience that you've just had in a very different world. Things that seemed important before, may have lost some significance, and vice versa.

It's important to recognize that the journey does not stop when you get back home. The effects of your journey may resonate within you at many levels for a long time to come. You may experience fluctuating moods, frustration and impatience with family, friends and colleagues. You may feel that a part of you is

still in that foreign culture dealing with those difficult issues. It is common for people to struggle to integrate their experiences of two cultures where there is a huge disparity of wealth and opportunity. For now, choose to be patient. Let time pass and be gentle with others and yourself. Don't make any big decisions if you are feeling disturbed and emotional. Over time you will likely develop more understanding and appreciation of your journey.

*Things you can do to assist your homecoming:*

- *Presume that the transition back home may be difficult at times.*
- *Don't presume others will understand what you have been through.*
- *Be patient with others. Trust that 'time' not 'conflict' will resolve things.*
- *Develop a support team. Link with people with whom you can discuss your experiences.*
- *Continue to write your thoughts and feelings in your journal.*
- *Stay in touch with peers who shared your journey.*
- *Maintain connection with your overseas contacts if you can.*
- *Stay involved with the work you have been doing overseas.*
- *You may want to share your story with the public e.g. articles and speeches*
- *Engage in activities that are meaningful to you.*
- *Continue your advocacy work.*
- *If you are worried for yourself, seek help from peers, leaders or counsellors.*

Someone once said that witnessing extreme poverty and inequality in the world had created in him an itch that he couldn't quite scratch. That person, and many others more, attempt to scratch that itch every day by helping to improve the health of the human family and the environment in which the human family lives. Perhaps you will bring your unique intelligence and abilities to similar goals.

May your journey be fruitful and rewarding.