



Into the **HEART**

Immersion Guide

Congratulations on joining *Into the Heart*!

This guide gives you the essentials for preparing, travelling, and making the most of your immersion experience.

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Travel Booking

International Flights

To streamline arrivals for all participants, please secure flights that arrive in Nairobi, Kenya at around 2-230pm.

We recommend booking through ERF's trusted travel agent, but you may use your own:

Cayla Gibson, Sterling Travel Co

 Cayla.gibson@envoyage.com.au |  0431 231 334

Accommodation & Meals

Nairobi

You're stay at **Loretto Mary Ward Centre** in Karen, Nairobi. The facilities are simple but comfortable, with ensuite bathrooms and wifi available. Most meals will be supplied here.

Loretto Mary Ward Centre

Maasai West Road, Karen, Nairobi, Kenya

+254 723 383261

A simple breakfast will be served each morning. Simple packed lunches will be provided most days. There will also be an opportunity to dine out (at your own expense) during the immersion.

Please notify any dietary requirement in your onboarding.

Safari

You'll be travelling to Amboseli National Park. There will be an early morning departure to drive and see Africa's big five with a background view of Kilimanjaro.

You'll experience game park drive's and and overnight stay at Amboseli Serena Lodge

Amboseli National Park

+254 735 522361

amboseli@serenahotels.com

Optional – Nairobi

If you require addition accommodation in Nairobi outside the immersion itinerary, we suggest making a reservation at **Ole Sereni Hotel**. The hotel overlooks Nairobi National Park, offers modern facilities, multiple dining options, and is conveniently close to the airport.

Travel Insurance

You're covered under ERF's travel insurance for official immersion dates and locations. Any personal travel outside these dates is your responsibility.

 **Tip:** Keep a digital and paper copy of the insurance policy.

Travel Booking Checklist

- Book flights (via Cayla or your own agent) confirming travel dates match the immersion schedule.
- Provide a copy of your itinerary to ERF.
- Advise ERF of any dietary requirements.
- Save/print your Travel Insurance policy.
- Organise extra cover if travelling before/after immersion.

Before You Go

Vaccinations & Medical

See your travel doctor at least **6 weeks before departure** for vaccination and medication advice.

You'll need:

- **Yellow Fever vaccination + certificate** (required for re-entry into Australia).
- Other vaccines and malaria medication as advised by your doctor.

Pack a small medical kit (antibiotics, Immodium, rehydration salts, Panadol).

👉 **Tip:** Upset stomachs are common—prepare, don't panic.

👉 **Tip:** There are several very good expat doctors and chemists in Nairobi.

Passport & Visa

Your passport must be valid **6+ months beyond your return date**.

Australian citizens are required to apply for a **Kenya ETA (Electronic Travel Authorisation)** online: etakenya.go.ke

You'll need:

- Passport photo, selfie or webcam
- Flight itinerary
- Accommodation booking letter
- Credit/debit card for payment

Working with Children

If over 18, you will need to provide a copy of your Working with Children check (or your state equivalent). Once received, your profile will be linked to Edmund Rice Foundation as a Volunteer.

Government Travel Advice

We recommend you check and register with [Smartraveller.gov.au](https://www.smartraveller.gov.au) before departure.

Familiarisation

In the week before your journey, learn about Kenya and the communities you'll visit. Understanding culture, history, and daily life will enrich your experience.

 **Tip:** Watch YouTube travelogs, read articles and study maps.

Before You Go Checklist

- Book travel doctor appointment
- Get Yellow Fever certificate. It's essential for re-entering Australia.
- Collect malaria meds
- Pack a small medical kit
- Check passport validity
- Apply for Kenyan ETA
- Register with Smart Traveller
- Do some background reading

Packing List

Pack for both basic and smart casual events. Bring comfortable clothing for Nairobi, and light clothing that can be layered for Maasai Mara. Don't forget warm layers for cool early mornings and evenings.

Clothing:

- Pants:** lightweight, quick-dry long pants (no shorts in slums)
- Shirts:** long and short sleeved breathable shirts for layering
- Undergarments:** Moisture wicking and comfortable
- Pyjamas**
- Swimwear**
- Smart casual outfit(s):** for dinner out and Mass
- Jacket:** Windbreaker or waterproof jacket
- Comfortable enclosed walking shoes:** Waterproof runners/hiking boots
- Shoes / Sandals:** For smart-casual events
- Hat**
- Scarf or bandana:** to protect against dust

Gear & Essentials:

- Sunscreen
- Insect repellent
- Hand sanitiser
- Toiletries
- Camera/GoPro/iPad
- Overnight bag (doubles as safari bag)
- Universal adapter (Kenya uses UK-style plugs Type G)
- Medical kit
- Travel documents
- Wet bag

👉 **Tip:** Pack light. You'll receive a participant's shirt to wear during the immersion. Laundry is available.

👉 **Tip:** Zip off pants can double as shorts if you are going on safari.

👉 **Tip:** Plastic bags are banned in Kenya (including duty-free and zip-lock bags). They may be confiscated on arrival, and penalties are severe. Pack reusable alternatives instead.

👉 **Tip:** Stick to neutral colours to blend into the environment if going on safari. Avoid bright colours or dark tones like black and blue which attract tsetse flies.

Gifts for Schools (optional)

If you'd like to bring gifts, useful items include:

- Books, stationery, art supplies
- Sports gear (soccer ball, skipping rope)
- Small toys
- Musical instruments

👉 **Tip:** Pack items in luggage and don't bring more than two or three of any one item to avoid customs issues.

Gifts for Staff (optional)

If you'd like to bring gifts, the Edmund Rice Foundation team in Kenya as well as staff at the project partners love Tim Tams and Darrel Lea Chocolates. Family size packs are gratefully shared amongst the teams.

👉 **Tip:** You can purchase TimTams at the international airport on departure if you forget.

On the Ground

Throughout the journey, you'll be accompanied by a local guide and your immersion leader.

Some experiences may feel confronting or challenging. Approach them with openness and humility. What feels “different” is not wrong—just another way of living and being.

You may be called *Muzungu* or asked for money, favours, or contact details. Simply refer all requests to your local guide.

Wellbeing

Witnessing poverty and inequality can stir strong emotions. Remember—you are here to observe, listen, and learn, not to fix or judge. Stay present and allow yourself to experience the moment with an open heart.

Prioritise sleep. Immersions are a marathon not a sprint. There is a lot to process. It's ok to take time out for yourself.

Check in on a travel buddy each day. A simple ‘How are you travelling today?’ goes a long way. If at any point you need support, speak with your immersion leader.

There will be daily time for reflection, group connection, and debriefing. Sharing how you feel is part of the journey.

👉 **Tip:** Keep a daily journal to capture your thoughts and emotions.

👉 **Tip:** Take time to decompress before social activities and dinner.

Safety

Be aware of your surroundings and listen to your guides instructions.

- Avoid flashy jewellery and valuables.
- Keep passport and cash safe (don't bring into communities).
- Read ERF's [Safety & Security Policy](#).

👉 **Tip:** Simple clothing, simple behaviour. Follow your guide.

Money

There will be an opportunity to use ATMs to withdraw Kenyan Shillings (via the Visa or Cirrus network) once you arrive. AUD and US dollars can be exchanged.

👉 **Tip:** Don't bring cash into communities.

Shopping

There are nearby supermarkets and chemists where you can purchase most grocery items. The project partners we visit often have handcrafted items for sale and we will visit local markets for unique items during your stay.

👉 **Tip:** Buying from project partners is a meaningful way to support the communities you visit.

👉 **Tip:** There are security checkpoints at shopping centre car parks and upon entry. This is similar to a domestic airport screening and is nothing to be worried about.

Communications

Our team will use WhatsApp to communicate with one another and with you while on immersion. Wi-Fi is available in most hotels and some cafes and shopping centres.

If it's important to stay connected with home while you're away, we'd suggest an eSIM (try [esim.com.au](https://www.esim.com.au)) and/or turning on international roaming.

👉 **Tip:** The best way to stay connected during your immersion is using WhatsApp. We'll send you an invitation to join the group before departure as use this as the primary means of communications during your travels.

On The Ground Checklist

- Wear discreet, comfortable clothing.
- Familiarise yourself with safety policy.
- Notify your bank of your travel plans.
- Check international roaming with provider or buy eSIM.
- Download WhatsApp App to your device
- Accept the invite to join the Into the Heart WhatsApp group