

International Volunteer's Handbook for A Rocha Kenya



Compiled by A Rocha Kenya
June 2012

Volunteering with A Rocha Kenya

- Notes for International Volunteers -

Thank you for volunteering to help us at A Rocha Kenya! We'd like your time with us to be as rewarding as possible. Please read these notes in detail to help your preparation, and let us know of anything else we can clarify for you. Bring the notes with you to Kenya so you can refer to them during your stay.

A Rocha – who we are and what we do

A Rocha Kenya is a Christian Conservation organisation that is part of a wider family of A Rocha projects around the world. However, you do not need to be a Christian or a conservationist to volunteer with us! All are welcome. Our vision is to join hands with people from all walks of life and reach out practically to care for God's world. To find out more about A Rocha, its vision and values, visit our website: <http://www.arocha.org>

A Rocha International is the umbrella body made up of a Board of Trustees who maintain the direction and integrity of the organisation and the International Team who are responsible for supporting and developing the national projects.

A Rocha began in 1983 in Portugal (hence the Portuguese name meaning "The Rock") when a small group of Christian birders realised that the role of the church in caring for the environment had been completely neglected and something should be done about it. They established a field study centre in Portugal as a place to carry out practical conservation programmes and where people from all walks of life could gather to discover what it means to care for God's world.

To date (2012) there are 19 countries which have A Rocha projects and they cover a vast spectrum of cultures and ecological systems. The key commitments of each project can be described by the '5 Cs' of A Rocha, namely: Christian, Conservation, Community, Co-operation and Cross-cultural.

A Rocha around the world operates largely with the help of volunteers who contribute their skills and time. Volunteers are great ambassadors for our organisations, networking and promoting our 'message'. They may be at the frontline of our work, collecting data for scientific studies, providing hospitality to guests, helping with environmental education, doing essential record keeping and administration and helping the centres run efficiently. They are highly valued and essential members of our teams.

The History of A Rocha Kenya

Colin Jackson the Director for Science and Conservation at A Rocha Kenya, caught the vision to start the Kenyan arm during his three year stint with the Portuguese project during the late 80s early 90s. A bird enthusiast since childhood and born and brought up in Kenya, he decided that his home had a real niche for such an organisation. Kenya is a country with a rich heritage of wildlife and habitat diversity, threatened by a rapidly expanding human population, many of whom rely on these natural resources for survival. Additionally, 70-80% of Kenyans are professing Christians, making a ready audience for A Rocha to mobilise on the critical conservation issues faced by the country.

After a year in a Bible College and another four as a research scientist at the National Museums of Kenya, Colin established A Rocha Kenya on the coast 100km north of Mombasa in an area called Watamu. He chose this location as it was in the neighbourhood of some key 'Important Bird Areas' (IBAs) across a range of habitat types, overlapping with a burgeoning rural human population.

A Rocha Kenya Today

To date A Rocha Kenya has grown from four staff members to nineteen and operates three conservation programmes and a field study centre known as 'Mwamba' (or 'The Rock' in Swahili). The programmes are:

- 1) Research and Monitoring, focussed mainly on bird and forest research
- 2) Environmental Education for schools, churches and community groups surrounding the key habitats
- 3) Community Conservation (namely the Arabuko-Sokoke Schools and Eco-Tourism Scheme - ASSETS – see <http://www.assets-kenya.org> for more details)

The two main habitats we work on are Arabuko-Sokoke Forest and Mida Creek, though we also have projects at Sabaki River Mouth, Dakatcha woodlands and Gede Ruins Forest.

The Mwamba centre, set just back from the white beaches and coral gardens of the Watamu Marine Protected Area, serves as the hub for our work and houses our offices and volunteer/guest accommodation. Most of the plot has been left wild in its original coastal forest habitat which is home to a host of birds and animals including a few specials and no less than 108 butterfly species recorded so far!

We have a number of sites of interest in the near vicinity of our centre which will be worth a visit during your stay here. These include Gede Ruins, Mida Creek and Boardwalk, Kipepeo Butterfly Farm, the Malindi and Watamu Marine Parks, Arabuko-Sokoke Forest and Bioken Snake Farm. Other destinations a bit further out are Lamu Island and Tsavo National Park which can be done as weekend trips.

For more regular updates about what we do at A Rocha Kenya, check out our A Rocha Kenya and ASSETS blogs on <http://www.arochakenya.wildlifedirect.org> and <http://www.assets.wildlifedirect.org>

VOLUNTEERING AT MWAMBA

As mentioned, the central base for all that we do in A Rocha Kenya is Mwamba, our Conservation Centre. This is where you will be based for the duration of your stay with us. Please see our website for a map and photos to familiarise yourself with the centre.

- **Supervision & care.** Mwamba is a caring community with a permanent team of fifteen. Some are resident, including the centre manager and his wife (Henry and Belinda Kigen) who liaise with volunteers, look after their welfare, and supervise those who are centre-based. Volunteers who are programme-based (i.e. with Environmental Education, ASSETS or Research) will be guided by their programme leaders. A brief induction to Mwamba will be included at the beginning of your stay.
- **Communication.** Please feel free to let us know of any difficulties or problems you may be experiencing in any aspect of your time with us. Do speak to Henry, Belinda or the person supervising your work to sort things out – don't let things build up!
- **Coastal Culture**

The local community are the Giriama people, one of the seven groups of the Mijikenda tribe. These days they have a mixed culture of traditional and Western. Many have taken on the Christian faith, others Islam and some remain with their traditional religion. As Malindi and Watamu are increasingly popular tourist destinations, many different tribes from across the country have come flocking to the area as well, so it is not unusual to see Masai in full cultural dress striding along the road.
- **Culture shock!** Those volunteers who are unfamiliar with Kenya/Africa will find that things

run **very** differently here to a Western setting. We will give a basic synopsis on a few cultural pointers, but one aspect many volunteers find immensely challenging on arrival, is the pace at which things operate. We are in a rural setting with few support services, at this point limited funding, and in an area (the coast) where there is a very laid back approach to timing that the heat has worked into the culture. Volunteers generally come in at high speed and expect to achieve far more than is possible in a limited time. Also, items such as computers are shared so unless you have your own laptop, you may sometimes have to wait for them to become available. Be warned, you will probably find the pace and services very frustrating at first! Please prepare yourself for this – your patience will be appreciated!

A few tips: Find out about different cultural practices from our staff members once you've arrived. Some examples –

- **Greetings:** These are very important in Kenya! It is the norm here to greet each person in a group individually and shake every hand, rather than a general greeting. Some time can also be taken asking after people's health etc, and telling them they are very welcome if they have just arrived, before discussing anything else. Kenyan people that are not used to international cultures will feel offended if not greeted properly. People will be delighted if you learn some Swahili greetings and a few other basic words. Ask someone at the centre to help you with this.

- **Right hand:** It is considered impolite to hand anyone anything especially food, with the left hand. This applies to receiving anything as well.

- **'Would you like some food/drink?':** In Western culture it is considered polite if a guest arrives at a home to first ask them whether they would like something to eat or drink before serving it. In coastal Kenyan culture people may be offended if they are asked whether they want to eat or drink something or not. It is expected that the host will serve something without asking. If they do not want it, they will politely say so as they see you preparing to bring it. This scenario can be common at our centre as many local people arrive and seat themselves waiting for a meeting with a staff member. The best thing to do (after greeting them, that is!) is simply to bring them glasses of water and leave the jug with them so that they can add what they need.

- **Dress code:** Western ladies may not wear as extensive clothing as would always seem appropriate to coastal Kenyans, so do bear this in mind! We have added more detail on the dress code issue further down in this document to help you decide what would be best to wear.

- **Alcohol and Christianity:** In Kenya many Christians consider drinking alcohol a big sin, and they do not do it at all. Western Christians generally have a different view. They consider getting drunk a sin, but having a glass of wine or a beer is no problem for them at all and is often part of their culture. So if you are a Christian it might be worth discussing this issue with the Kenyan people you are with. One of our staff members was very shocked to see a volunteer pastor from the UK cracking open a beer with great relish! So keep communication channels open to prevent confusion on this issue!

- **Being informed:** Compared to most coastal Kenyans, Western people generally need to be better informed about plans etc. In coastal culture, people tend to go with the flow more and leave the arrangements to the person in charge and are less concerned about waiting around if there is a delay. Be prepared to ask many questions as people may not naturally provide you with as much information as you are used to.

- **Being direct:** Kenyan culture is very polite. People will be very hesitant to say something that in their opinion may disappoint or offend you. If you ask a direct question about someone's opinion on something, they may not give their real opinion to avoid causing offence. So, if everyone agrees with something you suggest, it may not necessarily mean that they do, and it might be wise to enquire further at a later stage just to make sure.

- **'Thank you'/'Asante':** Western people say, 'Thank you' and show appreciation for something in words far more frequently than people do in Kenya. Do not be offended if you give

somebody something and they do not express verbal appreciation as you would expect.

- Dogs: We have two small Jack Russell dogs at the centre. Coastal Kenyans are generally more wary of getting up close and personal with dogs than Westerners are and dogs can be considered 'unclean'. Be aware that if you've patted the dogs not to shake someone's hand until you've washed it! Also Muslim guests are particularly sensitive towards dogs and it's best not to have them around meals at times when Muslims are visiting.

- **Volunteer tasks.** The work of A Rocha Kenya is diverse and volunteers of all ages come with very different skills and experience. For this reason we cannot give you an exact programme before you arrive. If you expressed a specific area of interest on your application form you may be allocated a programme leader; however we also have general tasks which are carried out by all volunteers. These are outlined in more detail in the second part of this document, but include:

- **Guest House** – general assistance including taking a lead at mealtimes with serving and washing, sometimes helping with cooking or cleaning etc.
- **Hospitality** – this is a key role of an A Rocha volunteer and can come up quite often during the day. Do look for opportunities to chat to guests especially at mealtimes, but also during welcoming new arrivals and helping them with queries etc.
- **Beach clean ups in front of Mwamba.**
- **Simple maintenance tasks** as allocated by the centre manager.
- **Assisting with bird ringing.**
- **Computer work** – data inputting, admin
- **Maintaining the Mwamba and Arabuko-Sokoke Forest Nature trails.**
- **Helping with food shopping.**

- **Taking initiative.** Come prepared to lend a hand doing many things. As we run a wide range of activities with few staff, you may find that on some days you will not be as busy as you would like. Please do not be discouraged! We ask that at these times you could lend a hand in another activity, such as helping clean rooms for guests, helping out in the kitchen, garden or with maintenance. We appreciate any type of assistance you can provide as it all works to keep our organisation running smoothly.

- **Weekly schedules**

In general, volunteers are expected to contribute the equivalent of a normal working week. Depending on the tasks you are involved in, this may vary – please be prepared to be flexible. There is usually quite a lot going on on Saturdays as well that you may need to be involved with. Your first few days will be an opportunity for settling in and getting to know the centre.

- Weekly meetings: we hold a weekly meeting for all staff and volunteers on Monday morning at 8am where we have feedback on the previous week, have a short prayer session and plan the week ahead. We have a Monday bible study at 2:30pm for anyone interested in attending and a Sunday night meeting, 'Epilogue' which is a time of singing, reading from the bible and discussions, also open for anyone who wants to join in.

- **Holidays & Visitors**

In the past volunteers who've stayed for several months have had visits from friends and family who've been welcomed as guests at Mwamba. Should having visitors require you to take a break or be away from the centre for a while please coordinate this well in advance with the person supervising your work and with Henry and Belinda. It's helpful to organise a time away that will be least inconvenient for the work you are involved with. You are free to visit Mombasa, Lamu or other sites of interest over the weekends, but again, coordinate these with your supervisor or organise them for the end of your stay.

▪ **Accommodation**

Centre accommodation is in simple rooms. Some have en suite facilities, though these rooms are not always available to volunteers; the wider needs of the centre will determine room allocations. All rooms have mains electricity (220v, UK-style 3-pin) and mosquito nets, and sheets and towels are provided. Visitors are requested not to smoke inside any of the buildings.

▪ **Meals**

- Do let us know in advance if you have particular dietary requirements or constraints so we can accommodate you.

- Three meals are provided. Breakfast is a simple, serve-yourself meal of toast, tea and fruit, to be eaten before 8am by volunteers. Lunch is served at 1pm and dinner is served at 7pm. We have a 10am and 4pm staff tea break (20mins) where traditional chai (milky tea) is served. As an A Rocha tradition, we all like to gather at lunch and dinner to share the meal together to promote a family atmosphere and make all feel welcome. Another A Rocha tradition is that all guests, volunteers and staff members help with the washing up (except on your arrival day!).

- Mainly African dishes are provided so come prepared to enjoy tasty local cuisine. If you would like to keep a few supplies for yourself such as peanut butter, Marmite, honey, cereals or snacks, you are free to do so. Please put your name on personal items so that others don't eat them! We ask volunteers not to cook separate meals/food items for themselves. Should you want to do some baking, we can make provision for this, but bear in mind we are on a tight budget, so please check with Belinda first!

- Note: if you have any problems with the food, please report these directly to Henry or Belinda and not to the cooks themselves.

▪ **Activities/Entertainment at the Centre**

- We encourage longer term volunteers to take a lead on organising entertainment at the centre in the afternoons after work and on some of the evenings. There are also periodic field work activities that guests and volunteers can get involved with. Otherwise entertainment can be to organise a games evening once a week, volleyball/touch rugby etc. on the beach, quiz night at Ocean Sports, a wildlife/conservation-related DVD each week, a movie night, campfires down near the beach etc. Also a few peaceful nights each week for guests who are seeking a quiet, restful experience. Please chat to Mwamba staff e.g. the managers, Colin, Roni and Caro for ideas on this.

- Note: There is no TV and late-evening disturbance should be minimized, for the benefit of other guests and residents. Please note that darkness falls around 6.30pm all year round, and that public transport is not available in the area after 8pm (see *Travel* below).

▪ **Security**

Security and personal safety are matters of common-sense awareness, rather than worrying concerns. Please keep the door of your room locked when you are not in it and avoid leaving valuables near the windows, or down at the beach. There is a safe for personal treasures. The centre is in a peaceful area, and has night time security.

▪ **Finance & payments**

Volunteers are charged a minimal rate to cover accommodation & meals. This rate will be confirmed with you directly. Fees are due on arrival, to cover (a) the full period of your stay, if less than 3 months, or (b) the first 3 months of a longer stay, after which fees are payable monthly, in advance. If, during your stay, any time is spent away from the centre, this will remain chargeable, unless your room is vacated to allow other use.

▪ **Contact & communication.**

You are likely to find this limited, compared with home. Please be prepared for this.

Our details here at Mwamba are:

A Rocha Kenya Field Study Centre and Bird Observatory

PO Box 383

Watamu 80202

Kenya

Physical address: A Rocha Kenya (Mwamba), Plot 28, Watamu, passed Turtle Bay Beach Club

Email contacts: mwamba@arocha.org

Telephone: +254 42 32032; or +254 20 2335865

Email. We normally have internet access at the centre, though at no great download speed. Please limit all personal internet use to after office hours if you are using office computers.

Alternatively, there are email outlets in Watamu (Ksh 2 per min) and Malindi (Ksh 1 per min). Ocean Sports Hotel, along the beach from us and the Pili Pan restaurant both have wireless internet available for the price of a soda. So if you have a laptop do consider bringing it!

Phone. Outgoing calls can be made from the centre office if circumstances demand. These are chargeable, and international rates are costly. However there is a code which can be used to make it cheaper. Incoming calls are possible.

Cell/Mobile phone. Text messaging (sms) is possibly the best means of quick contact with home, and the most economical. If bringing a cell/mobile phone to Kenya please note that cell phones from Europe are generally compatible with those in Kenya, although they may need to be unlocked, but those from North America are not compatible with the Kenyan network. A cheap cell phone can be bought for around Ksh 3,000 and a **sim card on its own costs about Ksh 100 (don't get ripped off)**. The Safaricom service provider is the recommended network for signal at Mwamba so bear that in mind when buying your sim card on arrival. Mwamba does not have good network coverage but there are certain places on site where phone calls can be made and received.

Post. Mwamba has a PO BOX which is held at Watamu Post Office. This is checked regularly. Letters from Europe and America take about 10 days to arrive. Big packages can be slower and you may have to pay for them.

▪ **Report back**

Towards the end of their stay, volunteers are asked to write a report of their time with A Rocha Kenya.

▪ **Churches**

English language services take place in Malindi and a few other places. Most services, more locally, are in Swahili and there is a wide range of denominations represented. If you are interested in attending church you are welcome to join our staff members at their various churches or find one where you feel happy attending.

▪ **Centre fellowship meetings**

We have a weekly Bible Study and prayer meeting with the team on Mondays and a time of worship on Sunday nights. Volunteers are welcome to join in if they would like to.

▪ **Medical Care**

There are very good hospitals in Mombasa and Nairobi for emergencies. We also have a good Family Doctor close by for advice and minor ailments. **Snakebites** are very rare – we have yet to have a volunteer bitten by a snake. But in the remote chance of this happening, we are down the road from the Bio ken Snake Farm which has the top expertise in East Africa for dealing

with snake bites so you will be in good hands!

▪ **Climate**

Be prepared for high temperatures and humidity. Note: Mwamba does NOT have air-conditioning, though we do have fans in all rooms. The hot and humid non-rainy seasons are from January to late April and August to October. The rainy seasons cool things down! The 'long rains' come around late April to July and the 'short rains' from October to December. However, over the last 10 years weather patterns have become quite unpredictable probably due to global climate change.

▪ **Mwamba dogs**

As mentioned, we have two Jack Russell dogs that spend a lot of their time at Mwamba. We ask guests and volunteers not to give them any food (at all!) or let them follow you down to the beach – they respond well to 'STAY!'

▪ **Values and Ethics at Mwamba**

Being a Christian organisation is central to A Rocha's work and we ask all volunteers to recognise this. Mwamba is known in the area as a Christian centre and it is important that our values are reflected in the local community, both in business and in social activities. As part of our team, volunteers are our ambassadors and for this reason, we ask you to uphold our values for the duration of your time with us. The main areas are as follows:

- **Operating as a community** – This is part of A Rocha's style. For this reason volunteers are expected to live at the centre and to join the shared mealtimes when guests and team members eat together. Also be aware that the staff members are doing real jobs with heavy workloads! Try and minimise unnecessary interruptions and social chatting with them during work hours, especially given the relaxed atmosphere at the centre.
- **Dating** – We ask that you do not begin dating anyone during your time here. We have found that short-term dating causes immense problems for us as an organisation. If you find you like someone, please be friends with them and interact with them in a group. Once your time with A Rocha Kenya is over you are free to pursue a relationship with whomever you choose. If you are already dating someone from home and they would like to come and visit, they are most welcome. However, we ask that you do not share a room with them.
- **Nightlife** - We request that volunteers do not go to the nightclubs here as they are pick-up points for prostitution and drugs are around. There are quite a number of good eat out places and clubs that are fine so there shouldn't be a shortage of destinations for you to head to after hours. Please remember you are an ambassador for the organisation when you are out socialising! This is a small town!
- **Dress** – Given the cultural norms it is important not to offend sensibilities by, for example wearing inappropriate clothing away from the beach and particularly when going away from the centre, to church or when hosting community members at Mwamba. Ask for advice from Belinda as to what is OK to wear, but to save time ladies, please leave any belly-/hip-/underwear-flashing clothing at home! Very short shorts as well are not the best either, but are fine for the beach... When attending a community meeting/workshop, or church, or hosting community members at the centre, it's best to have the shoulders covered and wear a skirt that reaches below the knee or long trousers. At such venues, men generally wear long trousers but if very hot can get away with long shorts.
- **Hardwood carvings** – Part of the work we do is to join with the local communities to protect Arabuko-Sokoke forest and surrounds. There is still a roaring illegal trade in

indigenous hardwood trees and they are sold as furniture, building material and carvings. One species in particular (*Brachylaena huillensis*; *mbubu*), has been all but wiped out from the forest. African Blackwood (*Dalbergia melanoxylon*; *mubingo*) has been so hammered in Kenya, that carvers now go down to Tanzania to finish off their supplies as well. Please do not buy hardwood carvings here in Kenya (or anyone else!).

- **Use things sparingly** – As a conservation organisation we attempt to use energy, water paper etc. conservatively. Please switch off lights, taps and fans when not in use. Use both sides of paper for printing or print on the back of used paper. Save scrap paper. Please avoid printing drafts unnecessarily – if possible try and do the editing on the screen. Use shower and dish water sparingly.

Before your visit - Preparing at home

▪ **Passport**

Check that your passport will remain valid for the dates of your visit, and for at least three months after your return. If not, please take action!

▪ **Visa**

A 3-month tourist visa will be required for entry into Kenya: this can be sorted on arrival, for a cash payment of \$50(current) or Ksh4500 . There is no provision for volunteering under visas, so record 'Tourist' on your purpose of travel to Kenya. Alternatively, the visa should be obtainable in your home country, through the Kenyan High Commission or Embassy. Check their website for details. You need to allow good time for the application, and will need to send your passport. **Note:** if you are staying for longer than three months then it is currently very straightforward to renew your visa in Malindi, which is 20 minutes away from our centre. You may only renew your tourist visa once (i.e. you are allowed a maximum of 6 months in the country).

▪ **Inoculations & anti-malarial drugs**

Consult a doctor or travel clinic in good time before your visit, for advice on inoculations, anti-malarials, and any other health issues. You can expect to need inoculations/vaccinations against Typhoid, Hepatitis A and B, Meningitis and possibly Rabies, though find out what your country recommends. A Yellow Fever inoculation (with a certificate for travel) is a must for most countries.

Mwamba is situated in a malaria area, though for visitors of good health this need not be a major concern provided sensible measures are taken. We recommend that you take anti-malarial drugs as a precaution. You will generally need to start taking them before arrival in Watamu and possibly, depending on the type prescribed, to be continued for a while after departure. Anti-malarials are available in Watamu which may be of help to those staying for longer periods.

In your home country, shop around for best prices as these can vary considerably, and consider supermarket pharmacies. Note: Please avoid using Larium (Meflequin) if at all possible, as some people experience serious side-effects from it (not always immediately) which are unpleasant for everyone to deal with! The most common generally include paranoia, depression and vivid dreams. If you cannot avoid taking Larium, you should not be on it for more than 3 months. Please let us know if you are on Larium on arrival.

▪ **Insurance**

Make sure you have it! Shop around on the internet but make sure you have good medical coverage and your insurance is not so cheap it misses things out.

▪ Travel plans / flights

We request that volunteers organise their own travel arrangements in getting to and from Mwamba. International visitors are likely to fly into Nairobi (Kenyatta International Airport). From there, **Fly 540.com** fly daily (currently has two flights first one is at 9am and second one at about 10:30 am) to Mwamba's nearest airport at **Malindi**. Its advisable to book this in advance; it has only 32 seats and usually fills. Another competitive airline from Nairobi to Malindi is **Air Kenya** from Nairobi's Wilson Airport, across town, though they fly only on certain days of the week. Airlines web; www.fly540.com

There are also internal (and some international) flights to Mombasa (about 2 hours away from us), though travel from there to Mwamba is less convenient but if you must use then you will have to spend a little more on taxi to Mwamba currently costing Ksh 6000 equivalent to roughly USD 80.

A note about Nairobi airport: If coming through Nairobi you will need to check out of the International Terminal and check into the Domestic Terminal to fly to Malindi. For this you have to go outside, turn left and walk about 50m or so and you will see it ahead of you. If you are unsure where to go, ask a uniformed airport employee when still within the restricted part of the International terminal. Do not give your boarding pass or any flight details, when you are outside, to people appearing to work for the airport (check for identification). Keep an eye on your bags for quick snatchers! If you do end up using someone to help carry your bags, a sum of USD \$1 is sufficient payment – stand your ground.

Transfers from Malindi Airport to Mwamba can be discussed when your final plans are known. We recommend you take a taxi which will be easiest. These will be available at the airport. Kindly send us your flight details and arrival time as soon as you have it so we know when to expect you.

For those wishing to stay overnight in Nairobi before their onward journey to the coast, we are happy to recommend suitable accommodation. You can get a taxi to town from the airport - there will be a host of taxi drivers offering lifts as you come out of the airport. A reasonable price for a ride into Nairobi is maximum Ksh 1,500.00 (May 2012).

▪ Travel guides

We are listed in the Rough Guide to Kenya 2008. This or the Lonely Planet is definitely worth a read before you come, especially if you would like to travel a bit in Kenya after your time with us. A Swahili phrase book could be useful if you'd like to have a go at learning some basic expressions, though it isn't essential as English is spoken widely.

If you want to cash a traveler's cheque you will need to go to Malindi to the 'Dollar Forex' shop on Lamu Road.

What to bring

Currency Enough money to pay for your visa (\$50) and some Kenyan Shillings for the first few days when you may need to buy things. You can exchange main currencies at the Jomo Kenyatta Airport (US\$, £, or Euros), so come with those rather than obscurer currencies. Make sure you know what the current exchange rate is to avoid being ripped off! We now have two banks and an ATM in Watamu, the KCB bank opposite Watamu filling station and the Imperial Bank beyond Mama Lucy's supermarket. The ATM takes VISA, MASTERCARD and, for some people, MAESTRO (can be more temperamental). There is a Foreign Exchange in Malindi.

Clothing Cotton T-shirts and shorts are acceptable at Mwamba, though you may want to cover up against the sun, or wear long sleeves and trousers in the evening when

the mosquitoes are biting! Bring a good sunhat, flip-flops or sandals, stronger shoes for visits to areas where your feet need protection from thorns etc. If you attend church on Sunday, a skirt and sleeved top for women and long trousers and shirt for men are recommended. Swimwear if you want to take advantage of Mwamba's beautiful beach; snorkelling equipment is available for hire.

First Aid Painkillers, plasters, strong insect repellent, sun cream, antihistamine, anti-itch cream, antiseptic cream or wipes, sting relief, diarrhoea tablets and rehydration salts. Wet wipes can be very good for general use. It is important to drink plenty of water – a water-bottle that you can carry with you at all times is essential, and clean drinking water is freely available at the centre. It is not advisable to drink tap water in Kenya or to use it for cleaning teeth.

Driving licence Volunteers are not expected to drive the centre vehicle, other than in an emergency or in special circumstances. We suggest you bring an international drivers' licence if you are planning on hiring and driving a vehicle at any point.

Laptop If you are able to bring your own laptop computer this will be a big help for you to keep in touch with friends and family over the internet outside the centre and will also enable you far greater productivity in your work as won't have to wait for shared computers to become available. Many volunteers have done this with great success. Note that ARK won't be able to take responsibility for any damage incurred and you bring it at your own risk.

It is worth noting that **you are not coming to the middle of nowhere**. Watamu and Malindi are tourist destinations with supermarkets and pharmacies and other shops which stock toiletries, sunscreen, over the counter drugs etc. If you are here for a long stay you really don't need to bring supplies for the whole time. Marmite lovers, however, please bring your own as the supply here is not reliable.

Items for Mwamba

It can be helpful for items to be brought from overseas for centre use. If you are interested in helping us with this, please ask us whether anything needs to be brought. There must be prior approval from the Mwamba manager so that he can budget for the items. Common things asked for in the past include: printer cartridges; re-writable CD's; flash sticks; old mobile phones with chargers (from the UK); rechargeable batteries; pens, pencils, exercise books etc for children's prizes etc at the ASSETS Primary Schools. If you know in advance what tasks you will be undertaking as a volunteer at A Rocha Kenya, you may like to enquire before travelling whether it would be helpful if you brought appropriate tools, equipment, clothing or other materials with you that would contribute to your work.

Travel

Mwamba is approx 5km from **Watamu** village and 3km from **Turtle Bay**, which is a terminus for local minibuses (*matatus*). These run frequently during daylight hours between Turtle Bay and **Malindi** (24km), joining the main coast road at **Gede**. From Gede, other *matatus* run to Mombasa. Long-distance buses to / from Nairobi also call there (one daytime, one overnight journey per day). In some places, three-wheeled taxis called tuk-tuks are available. Between Turtle Bay and Mwamba, transport (if required) is a taxi or *boda-boda* (bicycle taking a passenger on the back. Their name, actually 'border-border', was so-named as these taxis used to take people across the border into Uganda). It is a 30-40min walk along the road or beach.

Note: there are also **motorbike taxis** available but as these are accident prone, helmets are not available and drivers invariably do not have a license or sometimes much experience, we have a policy that ARK volunteers **may not use these!!**

Lifts may be available from Mwamba at certain times as staff members carry out duties. Please note, that Mwamba vehicles are not available for private use by volunteers.

The following is a guide to approximate fares:

Flights	Nairobi ↔ Malindi	Ksh 7,500	Fly 540.com at 9:00 am and 10:40 am. Also Air Kenya from Wilson airport
	Nairobi ↔ Mombasa	Ksh 7,000	Kenya Airways, several daily
Long-distance bus	Nairobi ↔ Gede	Ksh 1400	Modern Coast or Mash, overnight or daytime (10hrs)
Matatu	Turtle Bay ↔ Gede	Ksh 50	
	Turtle Bay ↔ Malindi	Ksh 90	
	Gede ↔ Mombasa	Ksh 350	
Taxi	Mwamba ↔ Malindi Airport	Ksh 2500	
	Mwamba ↔ Turtle Bay	Ksh 300	
Boda Boda	Mwamba ↔ Turtle Bay	Ksh 50	

We hope this document has been helpful in preparing you for your time with us at Mwamba We look forward to having you with us!

A Rocha Management
June 2012