

CHILDREN OF WATAMU: THE HAPPY HOUSE HOME AND SCHOOL
APPLICATION PROCESS AND GENERAL INFORMATION FOR
POTENTIAL VOLUNTEERS

Before starting the Application Process we suggest that you take time to read our webpage www.childrenofwatamu.org and our daily blogs and watch the videos on YouTube to get some insight into how the Home and School were established and how it has developed since it opened in March 2010. The blog will give you an idea of daily life with the children and help you to decide whether it is a place you want to work as a volunteer.

Volunteers spend most of their time at Happy House School as the majority of the children are of school age. All the children come together for Kids Club on a Saturday where there is singing (start practising your favourite songs) and also the celebration of any birthdays coming up that week. It also provides an opportunity for the children to voice any concerns and for Papa Dave to give them feedback on anything that has happened during the week. If you volunteer outside of term time, you will be involved in a programme of activities facilitated at the Happy House. This includes sports, visits to the beach, nature walks, quizzes and games, music and some school revision.

Accommodation

There are large hotels in the area which is fine for short stays but many volunteers prefer the freedom provided by self-catering accommodation which is also a cheaper option. There are several places within walking distance of Happy House with wifi and swimming pool. Papa Dave can sometimes provide a B&B option in his villa in a gated community at Turtle Bay with the added bonus of a free lift in the morning. If you need some help in finding suitable accommodation we can send further information.

Transport

Most people fly into Nairobi where they go through immigration and customs before getting a domestic flight to either Mombasa or Malindi airport. The Happy House Office can advise on airport pick-up. Once in Watamu there are several options for getting about. For shorter journeys there are motorbike taxis and tuktuks which are reasonably priced and buses known as matatus are available for hot and crowded longer journeys. All these forms of transport are fairly cheap. There is also the option of car or bike hire.

Food

A lot of the large hotels are all-inclusive. If you are self-catering there are a couple of small supermarkets which stock many European brands although they can be quite expensive. Local shops sell fruit and vegetables and other basics such as milk, eggs, rice etc. and are a much more affordable option. Eating out ranges from extremely cheap takeaways from local bandas to restaurants aimed at tourists. For example beans, greens and chapatti will provide a cheap lunch for 100ksh. There is a Chinese restaurant and several Italian restaurants as well as those selling European style food mixed with local options. Papa Dave can recommend the best places to eat.

Clothing

It is usually hot and humid with occasional extremely heavy downpours depending on the season so bring loose, light clothing. The dress code in most places is casual although the coast is the home of many Muslims so some discretion is required e.g. it is not acceptable to walk through the village in swimwear. Sleeveless t-shirts and shorts are fine.

Health

There is a good clinic in Timboni and a dentist beside Blue Marmalade supermarket. There are also many Pharmacies where you can get cheap Doxycycline if you are using that as your anti-malarial medication. Tourists are charged more than locals at the clinic but it is not expensive and you can usually get seen within 15 minutes without an appointment. There are always mosquitoes about in the evening but many of the local shops sell tubs of cream which are effective and contain mostly natural ingredients.

Activities

There is a large range of things to do in the Watamu area and many volunteers extend their stay at the end of their time in the Happy House to explore the area and go on safari. All activities can be arranged locally. Activities include snorkelling, deep sea fishing, kite surfing at Garoda Beach, visits to Gede and Hell's Kitchen, dhow trips, a sunset canoe trip on Mida Creek followed by crab samosas at the Crab Shack, and a very popular one – drinking cold Tusker at a beach restaurant while watching the fishermen bring in their catch.

Religious Observance

There are many Mosques and churches of various denominations which welcome visitors.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Before booking your flights, complete and sign an Application Form and read and sign the Guidelines.

Scan both documents and email to rosep@childrenofwatamu.net and copy to sue@childrenofwatamu.net. Your email should be responded to within two days.

Book flights and start fundraising.

Six weeks before arrival apply for a police check (DBS, AccessNI, Letter of Good Conduct or equivalent)

Visit your GP or Travel Clinic and arrange for any vaccinations and medication.

Apply for your ETA (Electronic Travel Authorisation)

One week before travelling email a scanned copy of your signed Volunteer Disclaimer Form, and your DBS or equivalent.

One week before travel, lodge 500 GBP (or equivalent) in the Charity account through Just Giving so that the Charity gets Gift Aid and email rosep@childrenofwatamu.net to confirm.