

Tanzania Exchange - KCMC, Moshi, August 2018

I made an Internship in the Internal Medicine Department in Moshi, Tanzania in August 2018 and stayed 4 weeks at KCMC. Afterwards, I had additional 3 weeks for travelling around Tanzania. I just finished my 4th year at the Medical University of Vienna.

I chose Africa, because of the different culture and the wonderful african people that I already met in Ghana 3 years before.

I arrived at the end of July in Moshi. Moshi is a small city next to Kilimanjaro, the closest airport is the Kilimanjaro International Airport between Moshi and Arusha.

My internship began at the 1st of August, so I had a couple of days to get to know Moshi in advance. Moshi seemed to be really busy on the first sight, like every city in Africa. I needed a few hours to aclimate and to find my ways in Moshi.

Lots of people want to sell you a Safari or a Hike to Kilimanjaro. But there are also lots of International Students and Backpackers in Moshi, so you will meet a lot of people from all around the world, who can help you, if you need informations.

Accomodation

After the first days, I left my hostel I have stayed for the first 3 days, and went to the doctor's compound of the hospital (KCMC) on the 1st of August. KCMC and the Doctor's compound is a 10 minute ride from Moshi Town by tuk-tuk or about 7 minutes by Taxi.

All the International Students stayed at the compund in walking distance to KCMC. There are lots of houses and in most of them stay International Students, but also people who do Research or Tanzanian Doctors.

Most of the houses have 5-6 rooms. There are double rooms available, but also a few single rooms. You have to ask at the International office, if you want to have a single room. Additionally, every house has a kitchen, a living room and a bathroom. There is everything you need, except a washing machine. If you want to wash your clothes, you have to do it by hand or go to a laundry service in Moshi Town. Many years ago, the houses were build for Doctors who worked at KCMC. Most of the houses are old, but it is totally OK for 4 weeks. You have to pay for the electricity, which is about 20 USD per month.

Hospital

I chose to do my Internship in the Tropical Medicine, because I wanted to see patients with diseases that are not common in Europe. On your first day, you have to go to the International Office. If you can't find it, just ask somebody. Anneth is the secretary there and she told me that there is no Department for Tropical Medicine; because of that I was sent to the Internal Department.

You have to know that everybody who wants to do an internship at KCMC has to have a business visa, which costs about 250 USD. You can get the visa at the embassy of your homecountry but also at the airport in Tanzania. KCMC is the only hospital in Tanzania who wants to see this visa, it is enough to have a normal tourist visa (about 50 USD) in all other hospitals in Tanzania.

Anyway, after the registration at the International office, Anneth showed me the hospital and the most important places like the cafeteria.

The next day my internship began. The day always begins with a Morning Report. In Internal Medicine, the Morning report started at 7.30am every morning. One of the doctors presented the serious cases and the patients who passed away in the last 24 hours; afterwards all of the doctors discussed the plan for the day. It is really hard to understand the doctors sometimes (even for native speakers), because a lot of the Tanzanian doctors have a very strong African accent.

But there are also some doctors without this accent and after a couple of days you get used to the 'Tanzanian English' and so you are able to understand more and more. In July, August and September there are usually a lot of International Students, so that you are not alone and can discuss, what the doctors just said. The morning report takes about 30 minutes until 8 am. The ward rounds should start at 9am, but they usually start between 9:30 and 10am, because everything in Tanzania is 'pole-pole', slow-slow.

Because of that you have enough time to have a second breakfast. You can buy all kinds of traditional Tanzanian food at the cafeteria (like Chapati) and you will meet lots of International Students from other departments there. After the second breakfast, I usually went to the ward rounds, which take between 2-5 hours. Most of the doctors are very kind and try to explain everything they do.

The used language between the doctors is English, but nearly all of the patients only speak Kiswahili, so that there is no possibility to speak to the patients. But if you ask, the doctors will translate for you. In the ward rounds you go from patient bed to patient bed and discuss the diagnosis, plan and treatment. Normally the ward is really crowded (between 10-13 patients in one room); that is why the ward round takes so much time. On Tuesdays and Thursdays are major ward rounds, which means that there will be at least one specialist.

Most of the time I just shadowed the doctors and couldn't do anything. If you stay in the ward until the afternoon, you have the chance to do some punctions or physical examinations. After ward rounds, you can go to the cafeteria again and have lunch or you can go home, if you want. The doctors are all very relaxed. You can go home, whenever you want. Additionally, there is no problem if you skip a few days if you want to go on a Safari or on a Hike to Kilimanjaro.

You don't have to work on Weekends or public holidays, but sometimes it is better to go to the hospital on these days, because you have a better chance to do more than observing on these days. It is also possible to go to other departments, but don't tell the International Office. Just find an International Student and join them in their department. Over Time, I went to the Emergency Department, the Dermatology Department, and the Oncology Department. You have to bring your own scrubs and in a few departments like the General Surgery or the Gynecology also your own shoes!

I saw a lot of different diseases in my 4 weeks of Internship. There are a lot of patients with cancer, hypertension, diabetes, tuberculosis, HIV, Liver and Kidney Failure and a lot of other diseases. Usually the people in Tanzania go to the hospital very late, that is why you see diseases in their final stadium. It is very teaching for students from Europe, because you would never see the patients in this late stadium in Europe, but also very depressing.

Most of the people don't have a health insurance; that's why they have to pay for all the investigations and tests on their own. Most of the people don't have enough money and die because of it. You have to be prepared that the work in Africa can be very hard sometimes, because of this situation.

How to spend your free time in Moshi and in other parts of Tanzania

There are offered a lot of different activities during your stay at KCMC: Rugby, Basketball, Frisbee or Kiswahili lessons. I was informed about this in a WhatsApp Group of the KCMC Students. Most of the activities are joined by local medicine students. Moshi also have a lot of nice bars and clubs if you want to go out. I often went to 'Bikers' or 'Amuzz', which is near KCMC and visited by lots of medical students. Be sure that you are in a group of at least 3 people, because it could be a little bit dangerous to go home alone, when it is dark. You should always take a taxi or a bajaji if you are alone, even if it is just a 5 minute walk.

I have also been to two different Rooftop bars. Both are in Moshi and really nice. You can see the Kilimanjaro, if it is not too cloudy. There is also an abandoned railway station with a little shop. It is nice to sit there and have a couple of drinks.

If you want to buy some souvenirs, there are lots of little shops in Moshi for clothes, different fabrics, coffee, tea, paintings and other stuff. Never pay the first price, because it is always way too expensive. There are also a lot of good restaurants, I can recommend Indoitaliano, Milan's (vegetarian food only) and Krisburger.

If you want to eat local food, you can also go to the market, which is near KCMC or to one of the markets in Moshi. The food on the markets is very cheap and really good.

I also did a day trip to Materuni Waterfalls and Hot Springs. The Hot Springs are very nice, but don't go there on the weekend, because it is too crowded. If you have enough time, you could also go to Arusha. It is 2 hours from Moshi by dala-dala. I recommend to go by dala-dala just like the locals do, to get the real Tanzanian feeling. Arusha is bigger than Moshi and most of the Safari companies start from here. There is also a tour guide, who arranges the Safaris for most of the International Students of KCMC. Just ask for Erick. It was a really good Safari. I went for four days on the Safari and went to Tarangire, Serengeti and Ngorongoro. It was 640 USD per person if you go with 6 people. Don't worry, you will always find a group, that does a Safari, just ask them if you can join.

I would spend at least 10 days more in Tanzania to go to Lushoto in the Usambara Mountains and to Sansibar.

All in all, the internship and the journey after was one of the best experiences I made in my life. You can learn a lot at KCMC if you show the will to learn something. The people and also the different landscapes in Tanzania are really incredible.