

Dear family and friends!

We arrived in Arusha, Tanzania. All eight of us. Two people and six battered suitcases full of clothes, work equipment, MegaVoices, and wipes. Oh, yes, the omnipresent wipes - some designated for every part of the human body. With chlorox wipes thrown in 'just in case'. (Just call me Monk.)



It is spring and the air is a perfect temperature, with just a slight chill in the breeze in the evening. The purple Jacarandas are in full bloom. I drank my first Tangawizi, a carbonated ginger soda. Life is good. John and I agreed that our first day was absolutely to be a day of rest. After 31 hours of travel we would crash and pull ourselves together. Not so! Plans in Africa are ambiguous at best. Strategic planning meetings, fouled up hotel rooms, unexpected guests, preparations for recording in the bush, dinner with missionary friends.... But we are 'young' and tough! Well, perhaps more tough than young.

Northern Tanzania (which borders Kenya) is still reeling from the Westgate Mall debacle. Tensions escalated, nerves frazzled, citizens and ex-pats wary, even the 'm' words are whispered. (Both muslim and/or missionary.)

Some of the crimes which travelers to Kenya have oft worried about have now drifted south. Such as 'taxi-jacking'. Taxis are independently owned, hence unmarked and the driver un-uniformed. A tourist is solicited with "Taxi! Taxi!" Once in the cab he is taken to an ATM. There he is forced to withdraw the maximum allowed, then either taken to a secluded place to be pillaged and left naked or dead; or if he is lucky, left standing in the buff at the ATM. I thought it was only mzungus (white people), but our Datooga friend was mugged, robbed, and stripped naked in the market place in daylight. The naked bit ensures that ALL valuables are extricated. In my naivete, I assumed MY money was safe in my 'secret' money belt tucked into my underwear! Wrong. We're as careful as we know how to be, but will feel safer out in the bush.

Some things we learned yesterday from the bush missionaries about Datooga culture.

(1) We must NOT compare or even mention the Maasai tribe. There is still animosity between these two 'cousin' tribes. If there is one thing they feel they are NOT: It is Maasai. That is interesting because these tribes once lived together, they dress virtually alike, have many similar customs, herd cattle and goats, eat the same thing, etc.

(2) We must NOT use the English word 'food'. Of all the Datoog words, that word 'food' sounds like the filthiest, most vulgar word in their vocabulary!!!

(3) Our diet will be mostly Ugali -- thick white cornmeal polenta. This is typically eaten with sour milk or a spicy vegetable broth. A glump of white thick paste is rolled between the thumb and fingers, then dipped into the sour milk or broth in a common bowl. Right hand

only, please! (Huuuummmm! I'm thinking those wipes might not be strong enough. Bring on the antibiotics!) The host national missionaries raise chickens and have lots of eggs. And they slaughtered two chickens because we are coming.

(4) There is no regular electricity, but there is solar power a maximum of three hours a day. John is thankful he opted for the more expensive battery operated SD card duplicator over the electric one!

(5) There is no running water – meaning no reservoir on the roof. All water is dipped from vats at the well and then poured. Including pouring over items to be eaten (don't say food!) and over one's body. Drinking and cooking water is filtered. An interesting note: There was no water at all in this area except that which was carried long distances from cattle watering ponds further afield. The Assemblies of God put a well in. They are thrilled to have water to share with the village, resulting in new relationships and opportunities for evangelism.

(6) The Datooga do not 'work'. I was told they don't have a concept for 'work'. They tend cattle and goats and raise just enough corn to sustain them. During the dry season they simply sit around, talk and eat, hoping the corn lasts until they can plant more. They have no plan other than to eat and survive. They never try to 'get ahead,' save something for an emergency, put something away in case the crop fails, or plan for old age. I guess this would be pretty stress-free – unless you ran out of corn!! And famine has happened.

We leave for Lake Eyasi at 6:00 am tomorrow in order to avoid an 'Elephant March' through Arusha. All the major streets will be closed and thousands of people (not elephants!) will march in protest of the poaching that is taking place. It is probably better that our mzungu faces are not around anyway. ;-(

Well, no electricity or internet nearly all day today. I am hoping to get a moment of internet service tonight to send this! Especially since we will be totally off the grid for the next 5 to 7 days. PLEASE DO send email. We eagerly anticipate them when we return to Arusha!!! Also, please pray that I am not asked to pray before a meal and accidentally say, "Lord, please bless the food!" (Oh God, I dread this happening! I am so forgetful and so 'in the moment' that I just know I will say the dreaded 'F' word! Now I know what the F-word really is!)



Jacaranda's in Arusha

Ruth (and John, too!)