



KENYA

INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL AID **PROGRAM** **EXPECTATIONS**

For many of you, IMA's Healthcare Internship Program in Kenya will be unlike anything you've ever done before. To best prepare yourself for this unique experience, we ask that you carefully read and consider the following information about what to expect during your internship. By setting clear and realistic expectations, you'll be able to take full advantage of this incredible opportunity and enhance your overall learning experience.





PROGRAM RESIDENCE, LOGISTICS, SAFETY, AND SECURITY

Arrival

- Welcome to Mombasa! An International Medical Aid staff member will greet you when you arrive at Moi International Airport (MBA). The IMA staff member will be in uniform and holding a tablet with your name clearly displayed on the screen. Please approach them to begin your journey with us.
- If you're connecting through Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (JKIA) in Nairobi, you will need to change terminals to board your next flight. After deboarding, you will be in the International Terminal—simply walk across to the Domestic Terminal to find your connecting flight to Mombasa.
- If you have an overnight layover at JKIA, you will need to stay at a nearby hotel, as overnight stays are not permitted inside the terminals. Please contact your Program Mentor for trusted hotel recommendations.
- Once you arrive and settle at the Program Residence, please contact your parents or loved ones to let them know you have arrived safely.

Safety and Security

- IMA Program Residences are located in some of the safest neighborhoods within the cities we serve. Each residence is situated in a gated community and monitored by security staff 24/7. To date, IMA has maintained a 100% safety rating, with no incidents reported at any of our program sites.
- While our team prioritizes your security, you are ultimately responsible for your personal belongings. We recommend storing cash, travel documents, and other valuables in the safe lockbox provided at the Program Residence.

Shared Accommodation

- Rooms are generally shared between 2-4 people of the same gender.
- In most cases, roommates are chosen based on similar arrival dates rather than predetermined beforehand.

Amenities

- You'll have access to common areas with television, Wi-Fi, kitchen, dining areas, and a swimming pool.
- Shared rooms have a hot-water shower, air conditioning, and fans.
- IMA's housekeeping staff will handle the laundering of your scrubs.
- Optional laundry service for personal items is available at \$165 for the first two weeks and \$65 for each additional week. Please contact your Program Mentor if you would like to enroll.
- Please note that Kenya's infrastructure is less developed than that of some other countries. Power outages and Wi-Fi interruptions may occur occasionally and without prior notice.

Transportation

- International Medical Aid provides transportation to all program activities. We arrange transportation to and from the airport, hospital placement sites, local excursions, and any other program-related locations.
- When exploring Mombasa, we recommend using ride-sharing Apps such as Uber, Little Cab, and Bolt.
- Public transportation options such as tuk-tuks, motorbikes, and buses are prone to traffic accidents. The use of these modes of transportation is strictly prohibited. Please note, IMA's travel medical insurance may not cover medical expenses resulting from the use of these modes of transportation.

Personal Spending Budget

- We recommended budgeting \$100- \$150 per week for personal expenses. This amount typically covers expenses outside the program, such as transportation to and from local cafes, incidental expenses, and other general personal spending.



CLINICAL ROTATIONS



PUBLIC HOSPITALS

- Public hospitals in Kenya can be busy, overcrowded, and under-resourced. They may not operate with the same structure or organization as hospitals in Western settings, so it is important to remain flexible and adaptable. Observing local protocols, respecting staff roles, and approaching each situation with patience and cultural sensitivity will help you navigate the system and have a meaningful learning experience.

HOSPITAL DRESS CODE

- During your clinical rotations, you are expected to adhere to IMA's dress code, which includes IMA-branded scrubs, closed-toed shoes, and a name tag. Your name tag should be worn and visible at all times.

CLINICAL MENTORSHIP AND ENGAGEMENT

- You will be assigned a clinical mentor within your hospital department to support your learning. However, please note that your assigned clinical mentors may not be with you throughout due to internal hospital schedules beyond our control.
- When this happens, we encourage you to engage with other healthcare professionals and actively seek opportunities to learn.
- Clinical routines and patient care may differ from what you are used to. Take time to observe, follow local protocols, and seek guidance from supervising clinicians before participating in patient activities.
- Patient care always takes precedence. To make the most of your placement, stay flexible, adaptable, and proactive.
- Some hospital days will be slow. Use these days as opportunities to ask questions and learn about the healthcare delivery system.
- Always remain in your assigned clinical department.



CULTURE

Language

- There are two main languages spoken in Kenya: English and Swahili
- English is Kenya's official language and the language of instruction and business.
 - All healthcare practitioners can communicate in English and will be able to assist you should you encounter any language barriers during your clinical rotations.
- Swahili is Kenya's national language and the primary language for many locals.
 - While not required, learning basic Swahili phrases can help you build rapport with patients and staff.
 - IMA offers optional Swahili classes to support your communication skills during your placement.
- To best prepare for any language barriers:
 - Learn key phrases in Swahili before your arrival.
 - Listen actively and observe non-verbal cues in patient interactions.
 - Ask for clarification when needed, and rely on your mentors or staff for support.
 - Practice polite greetings and common clinical terms to show respect and cultural awareness.

Religion

- 94% of Kenyans consider themselves religious.
- The Kenyan population is predominantly Christian.
- In the city of Mombasa, Islam is the predominant religion.

Dress Code & what to wear in Mombasa

- Mombasa has a warm, humid climate with two main seasons: the rainy seasons, which occur from April to June and October to December, and the dry seasons, which occur from January to March and from July to September. Light-weight clothing, such as short-sleeve tops and shorts, are ideal for most areas.
- Mombasa is a cosmopolitan city that welcomes tourists from around the world. In most areas of the city, you are welcome to dress as you would in your home country.
- When visiting Old Town and certain other areas, we ask that you wear modest clothing, such as knee-length skirts or pants, to respect local customs.
- If participating in the Masai Mara Game Reserve with the Nairobi Overnight Trek, temperatures tend to be cool in the early mornings and evenings. Bring layers, a light jacket, and comfortable walking shoes. Neutral-colored clothing is recommended for wildlife viewing, and hats, sunglasses, and sunscreen are essential.

Tipping

- Tipping is not traditionally part of Kenyan culture and is neither required nor expected. However, in the tourism industry—particularly during safaris—it is customary to tip your guide.
- For the Masai Mara Game Reserve, a standard tip is around USD \$10 per day, depending on the level of service.



Cultural Competency

- During your internship, you will engage with patients, health-care providers, and communities whose cultural values, beliefs, and communication styles may differ from your own.
- Demonstrating cultural competence means showing respect, adaptability, and awareness in all interactions—key to earning trust and learning effectively in your host environment.
- Maintain confidentiality; never share patient information, photos, or identifiable details without consent.
- Be mindful of cultural sensitivities when discussing diagnoses or treatment plans, and allow the attending physician or supervising clinician to lead all patient communications.

Why Cultural Competence is Important

- Practicing professionalism and cultural awareness upholds patient dignity and safety while reflecting ethical engagement and mutual respect. This approach aligns with The Forum on Education Abroad's Standards of Good Practice, which emphasize intercultural understanding, community engagement, and responsible conduct in host communities.
- You will be immersed in diverse clinical and community environments where respect, humility, and cultural sensitivity are essential. Understanding and adapting to local customs, communication styles, and professional hierarchies will help you build trust and create meaningful learning experiences.
- The goal is to approach every interaction—with patients, healthcare providers, and community members—with empathy, curiosity, and cultural awareness.

Professional Conduct

Patient Care and Confidentiality:

- Always seek and respect patient autonomy and privacy. Listen carefully to patients' perspectives, and honor their right to make informed decisions about their care
- Follow attending physicians' or supervisor guidance in all patient interactions; allow the attending to lead.

Towards Clinical and Hospital Staff:

- Address medical personnel formally (e.g., Dr., Sister, Matron) unless invited to do otherwise.
- Follow all clinical instructions and be attentive during ward rounds and procedures; avoid side conversations or walking in and out of consultations and procedures.
- Acknowledge and respect local expertise; avoid comparing practices to your home country.
- Show patience and professionalism; avoid questioning or challenging staff decisions in public settings or displaying visible frustration. Instead,
- Use devices only for educational or professional purposes, such as note-taking or referencing medical materials, and only when appropriate and permitted.
- Do not use phones or social media for personal communication during clinical activities.

Towards the Community:

- Show respect for Kenyan traditions, beliefs, and religious practices.
- Participate positively and respectfully during community outreach or home visits.
- Be punctual, reliable, and appropriately dressed for all professional and community engagements.

GLOBAL INITIATIVES

- At International Medical Aid, our goal is to improve accessibility to medical and public health resources in the world's most underserved communities.
- Our Global Initiatives are organized for the benefit of, and in collaboration with, the communities we work in. Consequently, participation in the Hygiene Education Sessions, Women's Health Education Sessions, Community Medical Clinics, and Mental Health Awareness Clinics is not guaranteed during your Program Duration.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS TIPS

- Make sure to get plenty of sleep and rest during your internship. This will help you engage and participate fully in the program activities.
- Stay productive, but avoid burnout. Avoid overexertion by not signing up for too many night and afternoon shifts.
- Stay hydrated, especially outdoors. It's very important to stay well-hydrated in Mombasa's warm, humid climate.
- The drinking age in Kenya is 18 years. Do not overindulge.
- Invest in a good sunscreen. We recommend a waterproof sunscreen with an SPF of at least 50. Wear sunscreen daily and keep it well applied during local excursions and treks, such as the Malindi/Watamu Beach Safari.



GET IN TOUCH

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