



CROSSING THRESHOLDS

January 2024
Welcome Packet



"Go to the people... learn from them... love them. Start with what they know. Build with what they have. When the work is done, the task accomplished, the people will say 'We have done this ourselves.'" - Lao Tzu

Crossing Thresholds goes to the people, learns from them, and builds schools with them.

Come, and be a part of us.



Dear Friends,

We are honored that you are considering Crossing Thresholds (CT) for your travel adventure to Kenya. We are less of a business and more of a passionate commitment. Our goals for every volunteer are straightforward – exposure to another part of the world, dynamic cultural exchange and learning, and the opportunity to give your time and talents where they are needed.

At CT, our mission is to reclaim the original meaning of philanthropy – *a love for humanity that breeds familiarity, loyalty and generosity*. Wherever we live, whatever our ethnic or religious identity, and irrespective of our material resources, **we are all philanthropists**. We were born to locate ourselves in the give-and-take of life's unfolding; and we were born to try and create a safer and better world for future generations.

Our trips to Kenya are only 9 days in length, yet you will be amazed at how much you can see, how much you will learn, and how much you can accomplish in a short period of time. The schedule includes 5-6 days working in the Kibera Slum, with an option to extend your trip to include a separate 2-3 day safari at one of Kenya's national parks. The experience in Kibera can be quite emotional, chaotic, and intense. It is not easy to make sense of the poverty, the squalor, and the frenzy of slum life. At the same time, you will be touched by the courage, resilience, and hope of children and adults alike who are working hard to improve their life circumstances.

At the end of each day, we will return to a clean and comfortable hotel where you will find electricity, running water, and mosquito netting. You can expect healthy and good meals. However, each volunteer should be reminded that we are traveling in Africa; there may be power outages, and hot water is never guaranteed. If these types of inconveniences are problematic, this trip may not be ideal for you.

Our pledge is to facilitate an unforgettable experience that will open your heart, challenge your thinking, and perhaps unleash your passion for philanthropy.

To help guide you in making an informed decision about joining a CT trip, please see the enclosed documents regarding costs and sample itinerary.

With anticipation,

Carter Via
Executive Director



Trip Cost & Breakdown

Our trip fees cover most of your expenses on the ground in Kenya including room, board, and ground transportation and project contribution.* **We do not cover the cost of flights.** If you need assistance choosing your flights, do not hesitate to get in touch with us!

Adult rate \$2,950.00

Youth / Group rate \$2,650.00

If interested in Youth / Group rate, please reach out for more information.

Alongside trip fees, Crossing Thresholds asks each trip participant to consider signing up for our Mentorship Program. Trip participants who sign up for this program will be paired with a 7th grade student at one of our schools and will meet this student during their trip to Kenya! Mentorship is \$500.00 for the year and covers the students school fees, school supplies, school uniform, and two meals a day. For more information on our Mentorship Program or to sign up, please contact mentorship@crossingthresholds.org

If the above rates might prohibit you from traveling with Crossing Thresholds, PLEASE get in touch with us by email or phone to discuss possible scholarship funds and/or fundraising ideas. It is our commitment as an organization to make this experience accessible to as many people as possible.

*Covers local Kenyan labor, project, program, and material costs (athletic equipment, arts and crafts supplies, paint supplies, construction materials, medical supplies, etc.)

*Pricing above does NOT include Safari. If you are interested in extending your trip to include a Safari or Beach Excursion, please reach out to us for details and pricing (A three-day, two-night Safari excursion can range from \$750 - \$900 at a 3-4 star accommodation)



Trip Preparation Form

- Purchase Flights
- Send flight information to alyda@crossingthresholds.org
- Make sure your passport is valid for the next six months (Visa requirement)
- Write a deposit check for \$500 (non-refundable) to *Crossing Thresholds*. Fill out and mail in Disclosure Form, Release Form, and deposit check to: Crossing Thresholds, Inc - PO Box 446. New Canaan, CT 06840
- Check enclosed packing list
- Consult a physician, and/or get CDC recommended meds and immunizations:
<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/kenya>
 - COVID-19
 - Malaria
 - Yellow fever
 - Typhoid
 - Hepatitis A & Hepatitis B
 - Routine vaccinations: Meningitis, measles, mumps, rabies, polio, tetanus
- Purchase an online VISA:** Please go online to acquire your visa prior to your travels. You can apply for a visa by clicking the link <http://evisa.go.ke/evisa.html>
Visa cost can range from \$50 - \$150 depending on which personal coverage you select.
- 60 days before departure:** Mail in remainder of payment (non-refundable) (\$2,450 for adult, \$2,150 for student/family/group)
- Depending on shopping interests bring \$100 – \$300 in spending money.** If you need to take out more money while in Kenya, we will have access to ATMs

Contact

If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to call or email us:

Carter Via: ccartervia@gmail.com, 914-610-8492

Alyda Twilley: alyda@crossingthresholds.org, 207-809-9454



Packing List

Our first suggestion is to travel lightly—you will be responsible for your own luggage throughout the trip and will probably want space to bring home gifts and other items from Kenya. Canvas or nylon duffel bags are recommended rather than hard luggage. And, you are advised to pack 1-2 day's worth of essentials in your carry-on luggage in case your bags are delayed. As most airlines allow for two suitcases, it is our hope that you may be so willing to carry a second bag on behalf of Crossing Thresholds that is filled with donations.

Of critical importance are your **passport, visa, plane ticket, medications, and spending money**. Depending on your shopping habits – you should bring \$100 – 300 (or plan to take out cash at ATMs). 1 US Dollar is approximately 100 Kenyan Shillings. Meals, transportation, and hotel costs are covered by the trip fee. Alcoholic beverages, single room requests, drinks outside of mealtimes, laundry, and extra hotel nights will incur additional charges.

For your general information, the weather is a comfortable 60-70°F. Though Kenya lies astride the equator, the higher altitudes create cooler temperatures – especially at night when a sweater or light jacket might be necessary.

<p><u>Personal Items:</u> Small dayback w. zipper Flashlight Camera Outlet adapter Toiletries Sunscreen Sunglasses Hat / Bandana Insect Repellent Antibacterial wipes Journal and pen Water bottle Work Gloves (for construction + gardening) Prescription medications</p>	<p><u>Clothing:</u> Sturdy walking shoes / socks Sandals / flip flops for evening wear Light sweaters / sweatshirts Rain Jacket Work pants / jeans Lightweight pants Shorts (knee length) Skirts / dresses T-shirts (not sleeveless)</p> <p><u>Optional:</u> Energy converter Overnight bag for weekend safari Snacks (granola bars, energy bars, electrolyte packets)</p>
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Trip Information

More about Kibera

The Kibera slum is home to roughly one million people. This unauthorized settlement on the outskirts of Nairobi, Kenya is the densest slum in Africa, and the second largest slum in the world. Since the Kenyan Government does not recognize the residents' right to live there, they do not provide local infrastructure. There is no sewage system, few schools, and even fewer medical facilities. CT has been bringing volunteers to work in Kibera since 2008, and leading work trips to assist our school-building projects on the ground.

Kibera Facts

Demographics

- Kibera has a population estimated at one million people living in a space that is about the size of central park, and is home to every ethnic group in Kenya.
- 75% of the population (900,000) is under the age of 18, and more than 500,000 under the age of 12. Kibera has more than 150,000 orphaned children.

Infrastructure

- Kibera is heavily polluted by human refuse, garbage, soot, dust, and other wastes. The lack of sanitation combined with poor nutrition among residents accounts for many illnesses and diseases.
- Homes are about 8 x 10 in size, and provide living space for families as small as 2 people and as large as 8 people.
- More than 50% of the adult population has no steady income, creating instability and desperation; malnutrition is rampant.
- Kibera has a severe lack of public services - clean water, sewage, public schools, health clinics, etc.

Education

- Most schools are non-governmental schools dependent upon charitable and private donations. These schools do not receive aid from the Kenyan government.
- Of the more than 500,000 school age children, nearly 40% of school age children are not in school (a disproportionate percentage are girls).
- Less than 15% of students who graduate from grade 8 have the opportunity to attend high school.
- Young people out of school are infinitely more susceptible to drug use/abuse and criminal activity; young women are more vulnerable to early pregnancy and the cycle of poverty.



History

- The slum originated in 1918 as a Nubian soldiers' settlement in a forest outside Nairobi, with plots allotted to soldiers as a reward for service in the First World War and earlier wars.
- The name "Kibera" is derived from a Nubian word (*Kibra*) meaning "forest."
- The Kenyan government owns all the land upon which Kibera stands, and turns a profit by selling long-term leases to slum landlords. Ironically, however, the government refuses to acknowledge the settlement -- denying funding for basic services, schools, clinics, etc.
- Since the early 1970s, slum landlords have rented out their property to an ever expanding number of tenants generating even more overcrowding and public health concerns.
- Tenants, many of whom live on the brink of acute poverty, cannot afford rental costs in Nairobi, and find themselves unable to escape life in Kibera.

Drug Fighters School: Crossing Thresholds launched its first collaborative school-building initiative with grassroots leader, Agnes Musau. Agnes and CT worked tirelessly together for five years to transform an empty dirt lot into a school campus with ten classrooms, office space, a kitchen, dining hall, dormitory, and counseling center. Drug Fighters Primary School and Feeding Center now serves over 300 children in grades one to eight and, simultaneously, offers residential care to nearly 50 orphaned children.

Facing the Future School (FAFU): In January 2011, CT established a partnership with Simeon Ajigo. Simeon's vision was to create a safe environment in Kibera for the children of single mothers. Simeon's vision quickly grew to include a preschool, primary school, health clinic, and community outreach program for at-risk teenagers in the slum. FAFU serves 375 children and provides each student with two meals per day. To further enrich the learning environment, CT helped launch a dynamic music program, a variety of sports programs, and much needed medical and therapeutic services.

Mobjap Primary School: The Mobjap Primary School has been built not once, but twice. Its founder and director, Asanya Bernard, began feeding and educating children many years ago. In 2016, the original school was built and dedicated. It was home to 350 children. In December 2017, a tragic fire swept through the neighborhood and destroyed Mobjap. For Asanya and the community, it was a devastating blow. Almost immediately, we began to fundraise for the purpose of re-building their beloved school. The outpouring of support turned into the Big Build - a 10-day Thresholds trip



(June 2018) with 66 volunteers committed to a new and improved learning center for these kids. Sometimes, dreams come true.

Center of Hope Primary School (CoH): In 2017, we discovered the inspired community leader, Isabel Omondi. In a small, rented house, Isabel was feeding and educating nearly 175 children (nursery school through 4th grade). The space was cramped, but bright and positive. With a vision for encouraging imaginative and critical thinking, Isabel implemented her own hybrid curriculum – conjoining elements of the Montessori approach with standard Kenyan subjects. Acknowledging her desire to build a much bigger school and expand her impact, Crossing Thresholds is making plans for a permanent school for CoH.

Community Pillars Alliance (COPA): In January 2021, when schools reopened after the pandemic, we welcomed Clement Ombati as our new partner and director of COPA. Clement was a longtime friend of Crossing Thresholds and a dedicated leader in the community. He opened COPA in a community hall with temporary cardboard partitions that served as classrooms. COPA is Crossing Thresholds' most recent school build, with construction completed in July 2022 by the volunteers who took part in the trip to Kenya. COPA is now home to over 160 boys and girls, and 17 teachers and staff who are very proud of their beautiful new school.

* **Working with CT**

No experience is necessary to join a CT work trip. Our program usually contains an element of construction, but we also encourage volunteers to utilize their personal skills and share them with the children and staff at our partner schools. Past volunteers have provided medical check-ups, started music programs, trained FAFU staff members in trauma counseling, led exercise, drama, and/or art classes, and provided career counseling for the *FAFU Youth Group* members. If you have any ideas about an activity you would like to plan, please contact us and we can help you prepare before the trip.



Trip Itinerary: January 5th – January 14th

- Friday, January 5th** Afternoon: Departure from USA
- Saturday, January 6th** Airport pick-up and transfer to [Fairview Hotel](#) in Nairobi
Afternoon: Lunch at [Fairview Hotel](#)
Optional Visit to Kibera
- Sunday, January 7th** Morning: Breakfast at 9am
Depart at 10am for excursion
Afternoon: Lunch at the Talisman Restaurant
Shopping at Maasai Market
Return to hotel
Evening: Dinner and orientation
- Monday, January 8th** Morning: Breakfast at 7:30am
Depart at 8:15am to project site in Kibera
Afternoon: Lunch
Work until 4pm, return to hotel
Evening: Dinner and reflections
- Tuesday, January 9th** Morning: Breakfast at 7:30am
Depart at 8:15am to project site in Kibera
Afternoon: Lunch
Work until 4pm, return to hotel
Evening: Dinner and reflections
- Wednesday, January 10th** Morning: Breakfast at 7:30am
Depart at 8:15am to project site in Kibera
Afternoon: Lunch
Work until 4pm, return to hotel
Evening: Dinner and reflections



**Thursday,
January 11th**

Morning: Breakfast at 7:30am
Depart at 8:15am to project site in Kibera
Afternoon: Lunch
Work until 4pm, return to hotel
Evening: Dinner and reflections

Friday, January 12th

Morning: Breakfast at 7:30am
Depart at 8:15am to project site in Kibera
Afternoon: Lunch
Work until 4pm, return to hotel
Evening: Dinner and reflections

Saturday, January 13th **Optional Safari Group Departs**

Morning: Breakfast
“See you soon” Ceremony in Kibera
Afternoon: Lunch at hotel
Evening: Airport Drop Off - Travel Home!

Sunday, January 14th Return Home!

Monday, January 15th **Optional Safari Group Returns to Nairobi and travels home (arriving home Tuesday, January 16th)**



Crossing Thresholds

Organization Policies / Behavior Contract

Dress Code

Your attire is an important way of showing your respect to people of a different culture. When packing for your trip, please keep in mind that while working in Kibera, all attire **MUST** be modest and unrevealing for both boys and girls. While on the work site please also refrain from wearing jewelry.

Alcohol and Drug Policy

Crossing Thresholds adheres to a strict drug and alcohol policy. No one under the age of 21 is permitted to consume alcohol or use illicit drugs. At all times, trip participants are expected to follow the rules of conduct that protect the interest and safety of our volunteers and the communities where we serve. Failure to comply may result in being sent home at the participant's expense.

Age Limits

Crossing Thresholds does recognize age restrictions. With more than 10 years of experience and a commitment to protect the quality of our trips for all participants, one must be 14 or older to travel with CT. (Special consideration may be granted to children 12-13 years if accompanied by a parent or guardian.)



Crossing Thresholds Inc. – Kenya Trip Agreement and Release

Trip Dates: _____

This document is a legally binding release, which, in certain situations, will reduce or eliminate your legal rights and legal recourse. Please read it carefully before signing.

This AGREEMENT and RELEASE is between _____ (“Participant”) and Crossing Thresholds, Inc. (CT). This Agreement and Release is entered into in connection with the program sponsored by CT, which provides the opportunity for Participant to travel to Kenya to engage in volunteer service and cultural exchange. Participant enters into this Agreement and Release in consideration of the opportunity to participate in the Program and for other good and valuable consideration, the sufficiency of which the parties acknowledge

Participant acknowledges that the Program involves travel to a developing country with a possibly unstable political system and differing cultural expectations and practices. Participant acknowledges that there are risks inherent in such trips, including, but not limited to, forces of nature, accident or illness in remote places without immediate access to adequate medical facilities, a lower standard of sanitation, job site injury, and travel by air, automobile, truck, on foot or by other conveyance. Participant assumes all the risks of the Program, including health and personal safety risks, and waives all claims for loss or injury to person or property while participating in any of the activities contemplated thereby, whether such loss or injury results from the negligence of CT or its officers, directors, employees, liability insurance carriers or agents, or from some other cause. Therefore, in consideration of the right to participate in the Program, and of the services, food and transportation arranged by CT and its agents and associates, the undersigned Participant, intending to be legally bound, consents to the assumption of such risks, and agrees to forever waive, discharge and release for Participant and Participant’s heirs, executors, and administrators, all rights and claims for injuries, damages, illness, losses, demands and other actions of every kind and nature whatsoever, which Participant may have against CT or its officers, directors, employees, liability insurance carriers and agents and all of those entities’ representatives, successors and assigns, resulting from or in connection with the Program or any other activities arranged for Participant by CT and/or its agents and associates.



Signature: _____ Date: _____

Crossing Thresholds Inc. – Kenya Trip
Personal and Health Information Disclosure

Please let us know of any physical limitations or medical conditions which may, for any reason, interfere with your ability to fully participate in the program.

Trip Dates: _____

Name (as it appears on your passport):

Mailing Address:

City _____ **State** _____ **Zip** _____

Home Phone: _____ **Day Phone/Cell:** _____

Preferred E-Mail: _____

Passport #: _____ **Expiration Date:** _____

Issuing country: _____

(Please note- Passport must be valid for at least 6 months from date of departure!)



(Please circle)

Do you have any **medical or surgical condition(s)** that require you to see a physician regularly?

- Yes If yes, please explain:
 No

Have you had any **medical condition** which is now stable, but which may recur while traveling?

- Yes If yes, please explain:
 No

Do you have any **physical limitations?** (i.e. impaired vision, hearing, breathing, mobility, etc):

- Yes If yes, please explain:
 No

Do you have a **history of mental or emotional instability** for which you have sought medical attention?

- Yes If yes, please explain:
 No

Are you currently **under the care of a physician** for any of the above-mentioned conditions?

- Yes If yes, please explain:
 No

Please list all **medications** that you are currently taking; both prescription and over-the-counter and the reason for taking the medication(s):

Please list all **allergies** that you have (including medication, food, environmental, etc.), or indicate none:



Please indicate if you have any special **dietary restrictions**:

Who is your **Personal Physician**:

Phone #:

Your current **health insurance policy**:

Company:

Policy #:

Group #:

Name of Insured:

Are you planning to purchase **emergency medical evacuation insurance**?

Yes If yes, provide the name of the policy:

No

EMERGENCY CONTACT:

Name:

Address:

City ----- State ----- Zip -----

Home Phone:

Day Phone/Cell:

I affirm that all the above information is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge. I understand the health risks involved in traveling to a developing country. I consider myself in good mental and physical shape.

Signature: ----- Date: -----