

Greetings from Tanzania by Sue Slocum

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Monday, March 9, 2009

Brace yourself; this email will be a long one. Three weeks have flown by and I have a lot to tell you. The girls arrived on a Sunday and we quickly settled into an upscale hotel in Arusha Town, drinking and talking just like old times. We walked through town, enjoyed ethnic food (both African and Indian) and the girls began shopping immediately. The week before their arrival, I had conducted an interview in the village of N'gorngorgare at the base of Mount Meru. This village had wanted to start doing village tours for tourists and my friends were their first visitors. We stopped at their snake and reptile museum, then had a local ugalia and boiled corn for lunch. Afterwards, they performed Masaai dances and we took a tour of their shamba (farm) to see all their exotic fruits and coffee beans growing. The girls had a wonderful time playing with the children, taking their pictures and allowing the children to view themselves in the digital camera. My next step is to make up some fliers to place at nearby hotels to help advertise the program.

My key concern with this village project is the distribution of money within the village itself. The man who organized our visit asked for advice on what to charge. We readily paid the \$20 per person. I talked with the man about making sure that the money is divided up fairly between all the households that participated in our afternoon. He seemed reluctant and disappointed. I am afraid that if one person becomes successful on this project, the villagers will become jealous and rebel, leading to animosity towards the tourists who visit. This great idea of theirs could easily backfire and lead to hostility and self destruction. That night, we returned to our hotel and told the manager about our day. The manager thought it was a great idea and agreed to support our project by sending tourists to the village. While I believe his heart was in the right place, and he seemed genuinely interested in helping out the village, he began to calculate the amount of profit his hotel could make off of the project. I realized how exploitive a project can quickly become because the village itself isn't yet ready for a large number of tourists. This example shows the need to balance community empowerment with marketing efforts so that tourism can benefit the entire community. If things progress too quickly, they implode and no one benefits. I am still pondering possible solutions and feel that this village needs more support than I can offer in my short stay.

After Arusha, we all headed out on safari to Lake Manyara, Ngorogoro Crater, and Serengeti for 5 days. I was impressed with all three parks, although the Crater was my favorite. It is very impressive and the number of animals was amazing. We were there during the migration, and there were thousands of new born wildebeests – some only hours old. We saw the big five (named after the five most deadly animals to humans which I had not known before) plus dozens of other creatures. The best part of the week was watching the girls when they saw their first giraffe up close. I even forgave Kelly for pounding me to get my attention as she gaped at the giant beast. Kathy had brought a new camera and spent most of the trip capturing all that we saw. I will have photos up soon (I hope).

From safari, we flew to Zanzibar with overwhelming heat and humidity. We had been spoiled in the high altitude of Arusha. We spent one night in Stonetown, then five days on the beach in Bwejuu. There we celebrated Kelly's 40th birthday with a fresh lobster dinner. We went out on a boat, snorkeling and scuba diving (and were attacked by jellyfish again), and spent a whole lot of time swimming, reading books, and eating good food. The ocean water was amazingly hot, above body temperature, so close to 100 degrees. From Zanzibar, Kesh and Kathy headed out and Kelly and I began our last week.

Once alone in Zanzibar, we weighed our options. We considered further excursions to see more sights of Tanzania, but they all seemed expensive and indulgent, especially after two weeks of high living. And Kelly really wanted to see Africa through my eyes. I called Pangani and arranged to take the next cargo boat across to see my old friends. Unfortunately, the boat didn't leave for another 2 days, so we worked our way north across Zanzibar Island. The boat trip itself was worth the delay as we had calm winds and smooth water on the four-and-a-half hour trip. We were warmly greeted by Hothot when our boat landed and were escorted to the stopover hotel where I had spent my first night in Pangani five months ago. A few phone calls later and all my friends came over to join us for a few rounds of beers. It was a fun night and I am glad Kelly got to meet my special friends.

The next day we went to see my friend Valerie's preschool and stayed for a fabulous meal of octopus, pasta, and gin-n-tonics (the British make the best GNTs). We explored the rugged coastline and she invited us to escort her kids on a field trip the next morning. It was too good to pass up. We extended our stay another day and went with the children on the ferry across the river. We hiked up to a former hotel (it's closed and it becoming run down but still has staff working there) and looked at the views of Pangani, the river, and the ocean. Kelly brought her binoculars, and the children were awed by them. Afterwards, we hopped the daladala to Tanga and stayed the night.

The next morning we took the six-hour bus ride back to Usa River, checked into the Siafu house (the one the widows own that I stayed at before our trip) and Kelly got to experience two days in urban Tanzania. There was no water at the house, so Kelly enjoyed cold bucket showers and shopping at the local grocery store. We did cheat and take the daladala into Arusha Town so that I could shop at the supermarket and load up on goodies.

While we were on safari, Kesh had one afternoon of severe stomach pain. She also had a very ugly bruise on her belly. We put her to bed and gave her some electrolytes and she recovered very quickly. I just received an email that she had the same problem after returning home, only to find out that she had a gall bladder infection. She went in for emergency surgery to have her gall bladder removed and seems to be recovering very quickly. We are very lucky that things didn't get worse while here in Tanzania.

I am not sure what my plans are from here. I woke up this morning and within an hour my week was booked solid. I will stay here at least one more week, maybe two, and then head back to Dar es Salaam. It feels as if my research is quickly winding down and I will be home soon. Hope all is well with everyone back home. I will write again next week.

Sue

February 12, 2009

I don't have much to write this week and am sending out my email early as I haven't had much luck with internet all week. I apologize if you sent me a note and I have not replied. Between the lack of internet and the lack of electricity, well, you know how it goes by now.

I have managed to conduct a few focus groups this week. Other than that it has been very quiet. I have made a number of friends here in Usa River, so I have done more socializing this week. It has been fun. I am also ready for Kelly, Kesh, and Kathy's visit on Sunday – still counting the days.

I am running out of interesting tidbits to tell you. I did have an interesting conversation yesterday with a friend who is a minister here. He had spent 10 years in Uganda and has now been in Tanzania for 3 years. He told me that in Uganda, when you have a celebration (such as a wedding or funeral) a committee will get together and make a list of what needs to be done. One woman will provide the food, another the firewood, and another the linens. In Tanzania when you plan an event, the committee makes up a budget. This person is paid this amount for the food, this person this amount for the firewood, etc. Everything in Tanzania is about cash. I thought the story brought home the concept that each country in Africa is very different and the stories that I tell are about Tanzania only. They may or may not translate to other Sub-Saharan African countries. It is something I try to remember in my research every day.

I won't be emailing again for 3 weeks. Enjoy the break. Next time I will tell you all about my travels again.

February 2, 2009

I have settled into my new home in Usa River and have acquired an American roommate from Pennsylvania who is doing NGO work here for the next two months. I had met her before and together we are helping Martina organize many of her numerous charities. Running a tourist lodge is a full time job, so hopefully together, Liz (my roommate) and I can ease the burden some.

I had a WONDERFUL Super Bowl night and it will become one of my favorite memories from Tanzania. I lost a ton of money (OK only \$40) but managed to watch the entire game (no power outages) and chat on-line with dozens of friends. Love to Carla, Jeremy, Teresa, Sherry, Gena, Christine, Sue, Stacey, Tom, Kelly, and Tracy and my puppies which all spent the evening with me. I apologize if I forgot someone. I managed to stay awake until 7am, sleep for 2 hours, and then conduct a focus group in a remote village bordering Arusha National Park. The next night I slept for 15 hours, but it's nice to know I can still do it!

I was once again invited to the Rotary Club meeting of Usa River late Tuesday. The meeting was a real eye opener as I have not seen the news or read a newspaper in over 3 weeks. With the economic downturn and the lack of the short rains in Tanzania, the projections for this country are very dire. Apparently 35% of the Tanzanite mines in Arusha have closed causing large scale unemployment along with a projected draught and famine over the next 4 years. The difficult

part is that the prices are much higher in Kenya, so people are beginning to take all their food supplies to Kenya to sell. This causes high inflation in the area, especially if food becomes scarce. Rumor has it that the Tanzanian government has closed the border to food export although I have nothing to confirm that rumor. The discussion at the meeting was what types of preventative measures NGOs should take. The government is in complete denial and Tanzanian people do not plan more than 12 hours ahead. Luckily, I will be long gone by the time these projections materialize, but I still worry about all the people I have met, especially in the remote villages. I have begun to incorporate questions about recessions in my focus groups. It never hurts to see what the villagers think.

I have also come to terms on my learning curve on Tanzanian culture. Instead of a curve, it's like small plateaus. You think you understand; then something eye-opening occurs and you realize it would take a lifetime to fully understand the nuances. I have not discussed sex and friendship in Tanzania yet, so I thought I would try to explain it this week. The term friend in America is often used casually. In Tanzania it means a lifelong relationship that is highly regarded. The term dada (sister) or kaka (brother) is used for everyday acquaintances and does not mean a close friend. As an American, I use the term friend very frequently and have apparently presenting myself as a major slut since my arrival. Luckily, I am used to making a fool out of myself on a daily basis, but I am amazed that it has taken me this long to grasp a very simple concept. I believe it would take a lifetime to fully understand a culture so different.

That said I feel I need to mention the amazing sexuality of the Tanzanian people. Everything they do oozes sexual energy, yet they are very strict about appropriate dress (although that is more lax here in Arusha) and appropriate public behavior. Sex is not blatant as it is in our country. There are no rude jokes or cat calls on the street. It is expressed through subtle jesters and the choice of words. There is only physical contact within genders, not between them. But sex is everywhere: behind every door, every tree, between all people. Marriage is a financial partnership between friends which does not require monogamy. It is a very free lifestyle but has great costs in the modern world. I think I have mentioned before that the number of children here is overwhelming. An acquaintance just opened a new orphanage which can accommodate 12 children and had over 200 show up at their door the first day. I am not sure I could do the work that volunteers do here. The in-country work is so challenging. I keep going back to the basic question of course where are all the rich Tanzanians in this picture? And believe me, there are plenty!!!

I am so excited that Kelly, Kesh, and Kathy are arriving a week from Sunday! They will be here for 2 weeks (Kelly is staying longer) and I will finally be visiting the Serengeti and Ngorogoro Crater. It will be during the great migration, so we are all very eager. I will send one more email next week before they arrive and then will disappear again for a while to become a tourist.

January 30, 2009

This has been a very difficult week, although now that it is over, I am in a much better space. My frustrations finally got the better of me and I slumped into a depression over the weekend. On Monday, I learned that a very close friend, Bill Lassell, had passed away last Friday. Bill and I met my first day of college as we lived right across the hall from each other in the dorms at

Humboldt State University. In the past 6 months, Bill has written to me twice every week and has been a constant source of energy since my arrival. He corrected my grammar in these weekly emails and loved to point out my Freudian slips that once noticed, were really quiet funny. I have spoken with mutual friends and shared their grief, but I still feel very far away and wish I could be back in California with Bills family. Bills 44th birthday would have been this coming week.

On a brighter note, I have been continuing my research in Usa River, a city located half way between Kilimanjaro Airport and Arusha Town. It's about 15 miles from where I currently live and the commute is getting very expensive. I have a good friend that owns an ecolodge in the area whom I met at the conference last December. She is involved with many community development projects and I have agreed to help out at a women's shelter that she runs. They make beaded jewelry and the money has paid the rent, bought supplies, and given the women some pocket money. Most of these girls have just returned from prison where they were sent when they killed their rapist during the attack. It just shows that women's rights still have a long way to go in this country.

I will be moving to Usa River tomorrow and staying in a new guest lodge my friend Martina has opened. It's a bed and breakfast for tourists run by widows of HIV/AIDS. It's very simple, but clean and safe. Matina's goal is to open these types of guest houses across Tanzania for backpackers and socially conscious travelers. The house is self contained with a kitchen, shower, and hand-washing laundry facilities. There is a guard that patrols the property from 6pm to 6 am. The widows cook breakfast (Africa chipotti and chai) and clean the house during the day. It is also right down the street from Martina's lodge and behind the police station, so I feel very safe. Since I will begin my focus groups next week, it is a perfect location between Magi Ya Chai and Tengeru, my two study sites. I am also right down the street from Arusha National Park, a major tourist attraction.

This week I have been interviewing all of the hotels in the Usa River area. It is the same way I started in Pangani and allows me to get a feel for the community and the tourist industry in the area. These lodges are some of the most upscale places I have seen thus far, well over \$300 per night, and located right next door to the poorest people I have seen here. The hotel owners have already begun to adopt me, and I was even invited to attend the local Rotary meeting this week. As a former Kiwanis I felt a little like a traitor, but was very impressed with the projects that are being conducted around the area. I am also learning many of the politics of the area. Martina has just completed the new community center for the area (a beautiful building with 3 classrooms, a future site for an outdoor theater, and a preschool). Immediately upon completion, the village government moved into one of the offices, which infuriated Martina. There is still some political contention, but the building has been returned to the rightful recipients and the government has returned to their old buildings. The furniture in the building is very impressive, and as we walk through the halls, Martina mumbles this chair could feed 16 children, aghhh! I have also been tasked to start a kuku project (chicken) for some of the woman in the area. The idea is to purchase a few chickens so that these woman can supply eggs to the hotels in the area. It's quite simple and helps me volunteer around the town.

Arusha has been hailed as the gateway to Africa and is located smack dab between Cairo and Cape Town. It has some of the most expensive safaris and most glamorous resorts. I expected to find some positive community development in this area. Boy was I wrong! The influx of people moving to the area has created the first shanty towns that I have seen in this country. Other than the main highway, the roads are nonexistent, the overcrowding suffocating, and the lack of jobs and schools add to the thousands of teenagers with nothing to do with their time. While the downtown itself is fun and easy to get around, the villages around the main areas are in dire need of help. Even though Usa River and other areas with a large hotel presence are very safe, there are a number of villages I must avoid because crime is rampant. The handful of Europeans and Americans here try to do what they can, but the government, both federal and local, is Tanzania's worst enemy. Most of these people have been forgotten. This is very different from my last experience in Pangani and Amani. I expect to learn a lot here.

On a final note, I have arranged to stay at Martina's lodge on Sunday night and will have wireless internet and satellite TV. I plan to watch the super Bowl in style. I have had Brian place my bet in Nevada and asked Teresa to arrange for me to buy a few squares on the game board at the party in Seneca. If any of you are near a computer, look me up and share the night with me. The game starts at 2am my time, so I might need some help staying awake.

January 23, 2009

I have arrived safe and sound in Arusha and have settled into my new house. I live with 2 woman my own age and a 12 year old girl (1997 must have been a busy year for midwives and all of my lodgings have had 12 year olds). The oldest sister, Grace, works for TANAPA (the national park service) and is definitely the matriarch of the family. I was yelled at this morning for wearing the wrong shoes into the bathroom (cleanliness is close to godliness and keeping all the strict household regulations keeps me busy). Can't cross contaminate! Stella, the younger sister, has just returned from the US where she received her Masters Degree from Ohio University. She suffered a mild stroke last year and is still recovering. Grace works all day, then comes home and works around the house all night whereas Stella stays up all night watching TV and sleeps all day. Rosie, the 12 year old, belongs to a family from the sisters' home village in Mwanza, near Lake Victoria. The family had no money, so Grace has agreed to sponsor her through school and brought her to Arusha. Rosie is so shy that she has yet to make eye contact with me and she rarely speaks. The women are very stern with her and when she is not at school she is cooking, cleaning, and doing the laundry. At 10 pm each night she sits down to do her homework and by 6:30 am she is off to school again.

The apartment is very nice, but the girls are very frugal. It is too expensive to run the water heating system, so we heat water on a propane stove for our bucket showers. The balcony is covered with hundreds of buckets in which the water is stored and replenished weekly. My biggest challenge is to remember which water is for bathing, which is for cooking, and which is for cleaning. I always remember which is for drinking however. There is a TV set and a radio that is constantly tuned to the Christian preachers, often both at the same time delivering two separate sermons. The girls are a little taken back that I don't cross myself before every meal and say the prescribed number of Hail Marys each day. If Stella didn't have a son away at boarding school, I would swear these girls are nuns disguised as business women. That said, we

get along pretty well, especially Stella and I. Grace tolerates me, but I imagine she thinks I am from another planet. Our conversation is limited to household instructions.

So I know you have all been holding your breath about my research permit for TANAPA. The long and the short of it is that I gave all the paperwork to the Director of Research for TANAPA, who sat me down and told me in no uncertain terms absolutely not! He went on to give me a list of acronyms -- I assume refer to forms and letters-- missing from my file. The university says I don't need these forms as I am affiliated with the university, but the Director refuses to lower himself to talk to a professor at the university. It is the ultimate stale mate! Dr. Lindi is doing everything he can, and the problem is moving up the chain of command. I have visions of President Kikwete getting personally involved as Dr. Lindi tries to pull as many strings as he can. Until then I sit and wait, although not nearly as patiently as I used to.

Other than that, I keep busy. I saw my friend Colleen one afternoon and watched the inauguration another night at a local resort hotel. I am back to eating beans and rice every meal, so last night I cooked up a lasagna for the girls -- that was a huge success! The internet has been very slow, so I can kill most of a day trying to respond to your emails. Arusha is a fun town and, while there are a lot of hawkers about, they are friendly and pose little threat. It is easy to navigate and for the first time I actually have a map of the place where I live -- quite a luxury.

I will keep you posted!

January 16, 2009

Another Friday! This was a quiet week and I have managed to get back into my routine of fighting the bureaucracy and working on my transcriptions. I finally got some interviews translated and it is exciting to finally know what was being said during my focus groups. I have also been transcribing a focus group I conducted while visiting Selous with my parents over the holidays. I interviewed 14 guides and they were very helpful.

I still do not have my letter to conduct interviews in the national parks, but I have been assured that it will arrive by courier today. I have had to write a number of letters in order to get more letters that will hopefully lead to the ultimate letter and access to the park personnel. Dr. Lindi has been very helpful and just laughs at me when my fatalist attitude rears its ugly head. I wish I could be as confident as he is, but after 5 months of trying, you wonder where my doubt comes from.

I was originally suppose to head to Arusha on Wednesday, then it was postpone to Friday and now it looks as if I will actually leave Sunday morning. The woman I will stay with insists on picking me up at the bus depot and is out of town until Saturday night. I had arranged a number of meetings over the weekend with my staff that I have not met yet, but had to cancel and now it will be 2 weeks before we can meet again. While I appreciate my future roommate's hospitality, people can really screw things up with the best of intentions.

I have had 2 new roommates at the house in Dar...a retired geology professor from Austria and his Jewish American wife. They arrived the same day that my parents left and will be here the rest of the school year, so I have invested some time in getting to know them. On their first day,

the wife began cleaning the house, appalled by the filth, as she put it. Mama, the house maid, quickly caught on and has now given the house a thorough cleaning, even taking down the curtains and washing them. This couple has also arranged for all the mosquito screens on the windows to be replaced, so our house has been swamped with workmen since their arrival. As the American politely expressed, “the Africans are meticulous about their floors, while the rest of the house goes to pot”. Since floors are a luxury for most households, it makes sense to me.

Earlier this week, the department secretary handed me 40,000 Tshillings (about \$32). I asked her what it was for and she said for a seminar I attended back in September. I finally realized it was the seminar when I presented my research to the department when I first arrived. No wonder the turnout was so good. Everyone was paid to be there. I also received 200,000 Tshilling (about \$150) for the three classes I taught. It was a nice jester and I feel bad having complained in a previous email. Shhhh...it's our secret.

I have 1 month until my next group of visitors arrive. I am hoping to get most of my research in Arusha completed before they arrive, but optimism has not served me well in Tanzania. People think I am a nut case worrying about time, although the sooner I get done, the sooner I can come home to my previous pampered lifestyle and my doggies. As the saying here goes, “Westerners try to control time, but the Africans own time”. Again it comes back to knowing that you have choices.

That is all my news for this week. I hope you are all well.

January 7, 2009

It's hard to believe that I have reached the half way point of my trip. The last 3 weeks have flow by in a blur of safari, sand, and surf. We began our vacation with a four day safari to Selous, which is in the southern part of the country. It was right out of the old Africa you read about in books. We flew in a small plane to a grassy airstrip surrounded by giraffe and impala and stayed in a luxury camp where elephants and hippos walked through the resort. We were accompanied by a Maasai guide, who kept a keen eye on the animals. The area was very green, and all the plants had sticker thorns the size of paring knives. The air trip home was a little rough and while I felt as air sick as my dad, I managed to keep my composure a little better. Thanks god for air sickness bags. Of course as soon as we landed, mom wanted to have lunch...dad and I just watched her eat.

We had 1 week to bum around Dar es Salaam. We celebrated Christmas at my house and went out for a movie and a pizza dinner. Both were very good (you can see where I get my addiction to pizza from). Mom talked us into visiting the National Museum which was very nicely set up and the Village Museum which has a nice collection of full sized traditional houses. Mom and dad got to walk through an exact replica of my mud house in Amani. It was very fun. We also had a few visits with Dr. Lindi and his family and were invited to attend the Faculty of Commerce's annual picnic. It was held at Wet-n-Wild, the local water park. The three of us spent most of the day at the beach...the water in the water slides was a little too thick for us. It reminded me of pond water...yuk! There were beach games and traditional Tanzanian food and we even got t-shirts like the rest of the participants.

For New Year's we flew to Zanzibar and had 3 days in Stonetown then 3 days on the beach in Nungwi. I was very impressed with Stonetown considering I had heard horror stories from my friends that live in Tanzania. Sure everyone is on you to visit their shop or buy knickknacks, but in typical Tanzanian fashion, they were polite and respectful. We took a tour out to Jazoni Forest to see the Red Colobus Monkeys and visited the sights of Stonetown including the slave quarters, Livingston's house, and the huge outdoor market. Afterwards, we spent 3 days at the beach and I managed to squeeze in a day of scuba diving where I saw 3 reef sharks (about 5 feet long) and 2 turtles. Unfortunately, I also saw a number of fish with hooks hanging out of their mouths.

My parents left early this morning for their long journey home. It was sad to say goodbye, but I am ready to get back to work and finish up my research. Both of my parents were ready to go, although they both seemed pleasantly surprised by Tanzania and the Tanzanian people. They had many flashbacks of living in Mexico in 1970. I guess any developing country looks the same...the same trash piles, the same traffic, and the same bad infrastructure. At the same time, there is an air of hope and prosperity that the Tanzanians possess that even my parents recognized immediately. If it wasn't so darn hot and humid!

As for me, I am going to stick around in Dar for a few more days. I got nothing done these past 3 weeks, and I have tons of work to do. It's time to put my nose to the grindstone. I will probably head to Arusha the middle of next week. The house I was going to stay at fell through as my friend wanted way too much money. Instead Dr. Lindi has arranged an apartment with a girl that graduated from this department, who is also a manager at TANAPA. If you remember, TANAPA was the people I had so much trouble with in Pangani and they run the national parks in Tanzania. Funny how things work out.

I will try to get back on schedule and email once a week. Thanks for all the wonderful Christmas, New Years, and Birthday wishes. I am putting photos on the website of my parents visit. They should all be up by tomorrow. Enjoy!

December 17, 2008

This is my last email of the year, so take a breather and enjoy the holidays. Some of you have not written to me in months and some not at all. I assume all is well, but it would be really nice to hear the news from back home. Please write over the holidays and let me know what is going on in your lives.

I have had a busy week. I have taught a number of classes, some of the topics I knew nothing about. I have found that Tanzanians like to push your patients by asking more and more of you once you have offered. As I have been teaching MBA students, my advisor has been taking the time to watch television. Needless to say, once I heard this I suddenly became too busy to help out, especially since I was teaching classes like ecommerce in developing countries and organizational design. These are not classes I know much about and was not too beneficial to the students. I have been offered a job here at the university upon graduation. They were very cute and told me that there was always a place for me here. Later they slipped in that I would have to commit to a 2-year contract at the Tanzanian pay rate which is about \$1,000 per month. I didn't

say anything, but I don't think I will be seriously considering this as one of my employment options.

I have moved back into my old house, although there is someone else in my room. I have been put in the "extra" room which has no air conditioning nor closets. I don't mind as I was going to give my parents the room with the a/c anyway. On Friday the university lost its water source, so we spent 5 days without water. The power supply has been intermittent (not the power outages) and I have realized I would much rather have running water than electricity. Especially with 4 people sharing 1 toilet. Funny how people prioritize...

I have been getting up early and chatting with friends on-line back home. One morning after I arrived at the office with sweat dripping down my face, I spoke with John Fino who reminded me that it was sub-zero and snowing in Minnesota. Sometimes I forget it is winter back home. I also spoke with Courtney and Sue and keep looking to see if the rest of you are on-line. I am using MSN Messenger and/or Skype. Keep an eye peeled for me.

My parents arrive tonight. I am not sure if I am more excited about seeing them or the bag of Cheetos they are bringing for me. Tomorrow we will have lunch with everyone in the department and then we are off on safari on Saturday. Later in the visit we will travel to Zanzibar, so I will get to see places I haven't visited yet. All in all, this should be a really fun 3 weeks.

Happy Holidays to everyone and Happy New Year. I will continue my weekly updates after the New Year. Thanks for reading...

Sue

December 13, 2008

It has been a quiet week. I hung out in Arusha for four days. I had high expectations of meeting a few people and making arrangements for my return in January, but my visit fell over the weekend, then the Muslim celebration of Idi, and finally the Tanzanian Independence Day. Everything was closed while I was there. I did hang out with a friend I had met in Pangani who is a photographer and lives in Arusha. She has offered a room at her house for me to rent when I return and I eagerly accepted. It will be nice to live in a proper house rather than in the villages. I will return to the villages during my third site in the spring.

Entering Arusha is like entering another world. It's touristy and everyone is selling something. I have yet to see the "traditional" African crafts in Tanzania, Arusha included. Instead they sell cheap cell phones, leather goods, and plastic toys. Everyone speaks English, better than anyone I have met elsewhere (including those at the University of Dar es Salaam). Arusha is an easy town to get around and Mt. Meru looms over the city so that you always have your bearing. The city is loud and busy, but not too big and not as unpleasant as I had been led to believe. I have gorged myself on Wahindi (Indian) food all week and my taste buds have thanked me (my stomach hasn't though as I have suffered from heart burn each night...But it hasn't stopped me). I tried

the local Chinese, but the food is laced with so much MSG that you can still taste it in the morning. All is all, Arusha is a big change from the villages!

I treated myself to a luxury bus trip back to Dar (that means everyone has a seat rather than cramming people into the isles and in the overhead racks). Just my luck, the bus broke down outside of Moshi and the 10-hour trip became 13 hours. I was adopted by an American girl from Fresno who had an ipod with a number of movies. When I arrived in Dar it was too late to go to my house, so I stayed in a youth hostel with my new friend. I arrived home yesterday morning and I can honestly say, it was good to be home.

Dr. Lindi informed me that I was teaching another class starting this afternoon, so I spent my first night studying up on e-commerce and entrepreneurship. My plan was to make some power point slides, but in typical Dar fashion, the power was out all night. I also have term papers and exams to grade from the class I taught in September, so I expect this week to be very busy.

As much as you have all heard me complain about the commercialism of Christmas, I must say that there is nothing to remind me here that Christmas is right around the corner. Mom, if you're reading this, bring a few x-mas cds to help me get in the mood. It's in 90+ degrees and very humid which also deters from the spirit of the holidays (I was spoiled in the mountains this past month and need to re-acclimate to the heat again).

I will try to send one more email next week before I give you a break over the holidays (if I don't melt away first).

December 5, 2008

The drive into Lushoto was very disappointing. Between the main road and the town, the mountains have been deforested and remind me of the Eastern Sierra Mountains in spring, grassy and sparsely populated with bushes and trees. The road is paved all the way into town which was a nice surprise. As my bus pulled into the market square, the tour guides and taxi drives swarmed us. There are a number of tourism offices here, although they seem to be privately run. Since I am not doing research here, I didn't investigate too closely. I spent my first two days lounging around, checking emails, posting pictures, eating western food and sleeping. On the third day, I decided to go for a hike and see what was beyond the town. In no time at all, I was back in the rugged Usambara Mountains. This area is not as jungly, with different birds and larger villages. The agriculture is also different, with more vegetables and the most delicious little plums that fit in the palm of your hand.

The people here are more reluctant to approach you and the children are fluent in the saying "give me money". The prices are more expensive than Amani and cheaper than Pangani. People also have a basic understanding of English. I have seen a few tourists here, but again, not many.

There are two western style restaurants that are quite good, although that may just be my lack of exposure and my desperation for some new flavors. I was told that Lushoto was once the capital of German East Africa (1880-1918) and there are a number of old German stone buildings dotting the town. They are beautiful but poorly maintained.

After my third day, I realized that I still had a 10 hour bus trip to Arusha, so I decided to break up the trip and head a little further west. The main attraction between Lushoto and Arusha is the Pare Mountains, home to Mount Kilimanjaro. So on Monday morning I took the bus to the city of Moshi. When I arrived, Mt. Kili was cloaked in clouds so I found a small hotel/hostel near the bus stand. It was filled with tourists on their way to climb the mountain. I ate pizza, and after many false alarms, had my first hot shower since leaving home four months ago. I also got news for the first time in over 4 weeks. I was ready to settle down for two days when I suddenly realized that I was due in Arusha the very next day. Somehow I had lost an entire 24 hours. The next morning, under the blaze of the mountain in all her glory, I proceeded to Arusha.

If the thought of hot showers seems like a luxury, the Ngurdoto Mountain Lodge blew my mind. Five-stars all the way, with a golf course and a bathtub in my room. It took half a day to adjust to the numerous white faces, recognizable language (boy it's fun to listen to other people's conversation), and first class service. Not only do my cloths fit in, but I fit in. I am no longer the main attraction in town. I have melted into obscurity. The conference has been fun and educational and I have made lots of contacts.

I am off to Arusha Town after the conference then back to Dar es Salaam. I will write next week.