

### Tanzania World Challenge – Mae Macadam

Thanks to my grant money, I was able to go on an incredible 3-week trip to Tanzania, along with 6 other girls from my school, exploring the nature and wildlife of the East African country located within the African Great Lakes. Arriving in Moshi – the city at the base of Africa’s tallest mountain, Kilimanjaro – we set up our camp. Exploring the local area, to purchase supplies and food, was an incredible experience, with us all trying local specialities such as chips mayai, an omelette containing French fries.



After 2 nights in Moshi, acclimatising to the different sights and sounds of a continent I’ve never visited before, we then spent a day driving to the Ngorongoro Crater – one of the world’s top safari destinations and the largest, unbroken caldera in the world. This volcanic basin (pictured above) is a haven for wildlife, with the highest density of lions in Africa, including striking black-maned lions. Our campsite was just outside the rim of the crater, and the rurality of the location allowed us to see an incredible night sky teeming with stars – a memorable sight we don’t get to witness in the UK. Waking up at 4am to drive into the crater was incredible, as the early morning meant we were able to see many more animals, as shown below. I was lucky to spot a variety animals in their natural habitats at really close quarters – from warthogs to elephants, as well as lions and zebras.

Having experienced my first ever safari, we then drove to Lushoto, where we set up camp in the Usambara Mountains, part of the Eastern Arc Mountains, which stretch from Kenya - one of the world's biodiversity hotspots. We spent the next week doing intense hikes,

trekking through remote villages to river valleys, Masai plains, and mountain peaks which rose above the clouds. We were accompanied by local tour guides, who taught us about the area's biodiversity and colonial history. It was inspiring to be told and witness how locals had decided to deal with the lack of diverse local tree species by starting tree nurseries and growing local trees (as well as sustainable ones that could be used by the community e.g., avocado trees), without any help or initiative from the local government. Trekking through the rainforests and amazing scenery was a stark contrast from built up areas of London. Exploring this wilderness, and experiencing such unforgettable views, was probably my personal highlight of trip.

After our hiking, we then spent another week volunteering at a local tree nursery – an afforestation initiative focusing on reversing biodiversity loss and promoting the sustainable use of ecosystems. Working alongside women of all ages who were so experienced in caring for saplings, identifying different species, and cross-breeding species to make them more climate-resilient was a side of Tanzania that we never expected to see, and was hugely educational. It was a privilege to visit such a remote village, staying alongside a rural community and understanding more about their lives.

Our final few days were spent travelling to Dar – the country's most populous city - and then catching a ferry to Zanzibar, an archipelago of Spice Islands with white sandy beaches: the perfect end to our trip. Through tours and local guides, we were taught about how Zanzibar used to be a major hub of East African slavery, and we visited the beautiful beaches and cathedral of Stone Town – a world heritage site. What was really interesting was the diversity of religion: Christians, Muslims, and atheists living alongside each other as demonstrated by the variety in religious buildings. Another highlight was snorkelling in the crystal-clear waters off the coast, seeing diverse marine life in conserved coral reefs.

Undergoing this trip allowed me to see myself, others, and the world differently, as well as developing my confidence and resilience in spending a prolonged period of time in a new country. Fundraising independently and planning the trekking routes, cooking, camping etc was tough at times, but really added to the value of the experience. Whilst I found some of the food tricky, as a result of being vegetarian, I was also introduced to things I've never tried before, such as okra. I feel lucky to have been able to see such amazing wildlife and landscapes so far removed from my daily life in London,

It was also important to see how rural communities are playing their part in tackling the climate crisis, which gave me a real sense of the interconnectivity of global environmental issues. I am very grateful for the support of the Des Rubens and Bill Wallace grant which enabled me to expand my horizons by venturing so far afield. I loved spending so much time outdoors and being immersed in the nature and wilderness of a country so incredibly different to the UK: trekking in the rainforest, wild swimming, seeing animals at close range... The experience has definitely whetted my appetite for more adventures in the

future and has inspired me to continue to explore my interests in sustainability and geopolitics. I've been reading lots of books on relevant issues since I've returned, as I look ahead to applying to university, and I'm already thinking about where to travel next.

Please pass on my thanks to all involved at the John Muir Trust for helping to facilitate such a seminal experience and the adventure of a lifetime.

