Tanzania

Country Facts
Population: 41,048,532
Languages: Swahili and English (both official), other indigenous languages
Predominant Religions: Christian, Islamic, animist
Time Zone: Three hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time
Voltage Requirements: 220 volts
Telephone Codes: 255, country code; 22, Dar es Salaam city code

Introduction:
Tanzania’s wild places are still gloriously wild, with huge herds of elephants and wildebeests, flocks of flamingos, silent families of giraffes, and noisy packs of wild dogs. Lions have no trouble finding lunch; zebras skitter about, worried they’ll be lunch; vultures wait to clean up.

The wild remains wild because it is protected. Nearly 25 percent of Tanzania is designated as national parks and game reserves — from the Serengeti in the north, which sweeps uninterrupted from neighboring Kenya’s Masai Mara National Reserve, to Selous in the south, with its long distances and large variety of animals. No area is more protected, by geography as well as by permit, than the Ngorongoro Crater, whose steep walls create a separate ecosystem with its own representative collection of animals. The country also boasts Mount Kilimanjaro, the tallest mountain in Africa and the highest mountain in the world that can be simply walked up.

The Tanzanian people are friendly and interesting, with more than 130 tribes. Perhaps one of the most memorable sights is seeing a lone red-robed Maasai warrior stalking the parched plains with his cattle or goats. Despite the many different cultures, Tanzania has had a peaceful history and an enviable political stability compared to some of its neighboring countries.

Compassion in Tanzania:
Compassion International began registering children into its centers in Tanzania in July 1999. As of 2010 more than 63,700 children are assisted at more than 230 child development centers. The Child Survival Program serves more than 725 infants, toddlers, mothers and caretakers through 20 centers. Compassion partners with churches to help them provide Tanzanian children with the opportunity to rise above their circumstances and become all God has created them to be.

Cultural Information:
• Some citizens pronounce the country’s name as tan-\textit{ZAN}-yah. You’ll find tan-\textit{zan-KNEE}-yah to be more common.
• Tanzanians are “group” rather than self-oriented. Politeness is their hallmark, especially in public. Passing someone without a nod or smile is impolite. Spouting obscenities, verbal abuse or criticisms are social offenses.
• Swahili, the primary official language, was developed along the coasts of Kenya and Tanzania as a trade language between Africans and Arabs. It is a mixture of various
Bantu languages, Arabic and English. English is used in business, government and higher education.

- The most common Swahili greeting ("How are you?") is Hujambo (plural, Hamjambo). A handshake will follow the initial greeting. One possible response to a greeting is Simambo ("I'm fine").
- Public displays of affection are frowned upon, especially in Muslim areas. Homosexuality is illegal.
- "Please" (tadhal) has limited usage in the day-to-day communication in Swahili. It is mostly used in official communications and among the affluent communities and societies. It is also used humorously, especially among the Muslim communities of the coastal areas. To them, the word is stressed to mean nothing more than a humorous courtesy.
- The expression "thank you" (asante) as a word is deeply rooted and spread out in all ethnic tribes. This one word transcends ethnic tribal differences and almost single-handedly unites all Tanzanians. If Tanzanians are renowned for being very courteous, it is through their smiles and over use of the word asante. In showing respect (heshima) to both young and old, Tanzanian tribes have a diversity of words and deeds to express appreciation. In any local community, an ungrateful person is in danger of being marked and isolated.
- Hakuna matata, which means "no problem," seems to be an appropriate response to almost any request. Some other useful Swahili words include: sabuni (soap), taulo (towel), choo (toilet), maji (water), kahawa (coffee) and chai (tea).
- Muslim Tanzanians use their right hand or both hands to pass and receive items. Using the left hand alone, even in a gesture, is improper as it is the hand designated for toilet matters. Washing hands in a bowl or basin of water before each meal is customary and visitors should follow suit. Preference for the right hand is also universal and not limited to Muslims.
- If you are interested in photographing people, it is courteous to ask before taking the photograph.
- Tanzania is one of the few places where hotels can have baboon problems: Too many of the aggressive little fellows want in to look for food. At the Lobo Lodge, in the middle of the Serengeti, it is amusing to watch them poke about, searching for an unlocked window. It is not amusing, though, when they get inside and tear things up. It is worth remembering that although baboons have no problems approaching humans, they can be aggressive, and you should not let them get too close.
- In Tanzania, women and men have the same earning power, although the per capita income for all people is low.
- In the government, universal voting prevails and women hold an apportioned number of seats in the governing bodies. There are 37 appointed seats for women in the National Assembly.
- In both business and non-government organizations (NGOs), women are receiving high caliber training and more foreign funds are available to assist women than other groups in Tanzania. In terms of personal interaction, men and women shake hands with each
other. A man may wait for a woman to extend her hand first. Making eye contact, smiling and showing enjoyment about the job at hand are "business strategies" for women.

Dos and Don’ts:

- Do be aware that ebony, the hard, dark wood used for much of the carved art, will chip and crack. Make sure your purchases are well-wrapped. When you get home, oil them to ensure the wood does not dry out.
- Do ask permission before taking pictures of people, especially the nomadic Maasai people of northern Tanzania. Also, be prepared to offer money or some item of barter in exchange for the privilege.
- Don’t — under any circumstances — take photos of bridges, harbors, military installations, railway stations, airports, etc., or you may find yourself under arrest.
- Don’t wear shorts in towns, though they have become acceptable in the wildlife parks. Women should dress modestly. Tanzanian women wear long dresses, saris or kanga, the traditional wrap dress. They rarely wear trousers.

Travel Tips

Personal Safety:
Tanzania is generally regarded to be one of the safest countries in Africa, boasting a high level of political stability and far lower crime rates than places such as South Africa and Kenya. However, it pays to keep yourself informed of political developments, particularly around election times, and to be aware of your surroundings. Nothing of value should be left in your luggage, as it may be pilfered in airports and even in urban hotels. Avoid isolated areas and do not travel at night.

Avoid wearing anything that can be easily snatched, such as jewelry and watches, and keep your money hidden. Do not accept food or drink items from strangers, including children. There have been incidents where these have been drugged to aid robbery. Guard all your possessions fiercely at the bus stations in Dar es Salaam, Moshi and Arusha.

Leave at home all unnecessary credit cards, social security card, library cards and similar items you may routinely carry in your wallet. Do not take more cash than you reasonably require for that day. Use the room safe or hotel safe to secure valuables as well as additional cash. Secure cash in multiple locations – wallet, various pockets, money belts. Carry items in front pockets, not back pockets. Do not display large sums of money in public; only make visible the amount of money that approximates your purchase. Maintain a close awareness of your purse, wallet, backpack, etc. as well as the people around you. It’s a good idea to keep one hand or arm in constant contact with these items especially in areas of high people traffic. Never leave items with cash in them (purse, wallet, backpack, etc.) on a bus, car, or any other location, even if the vehicle is being watched by Compassion staff or Compassion–hired contractors. Stay alert and be cautious at all times. Don’t take safety & security for granted.

Health:
Sanitary conditions in most restaurants in Tanzania can pose problems for travelers with sensitive stomachs. Most hot, freshly cooked food should be safe. But peel fresh fruit and raw vegetables, don’t eat salads, choose meat that is cooked thoroughly, avoid local dairy products and assume the tap water is unsafe. [Stick with prepackaged or boiled drinks that look professionally packaged — for example, don’t buy an orange soda in a Coke bottle.] Bottled water is available throughout the country at fairly reasonable prices. Check that the seal is intact, as there have been cases of used bottles being refilled from taps.

The biggest health risk to travelers is malaria, which is present throughout the country and can be fatal if it isn’t treated. It’s vital to consult your physician prior to your trip about malaria suppressants and to do what you can to avoid mosquito bites once you are there: Cover up at dusk, spray insect repellent onto any exposed skin, and sleep under a net. Should you display malarial symptoms (typically fever, headache and flulike heaviness of limbs) within a month or two of your return home, get tested immediately.

The larger cities have adequate dental and medical facilities. In smaller ones, mission hospitals and clinics are available. Tanzania has waived the requirement for a yellow-fever vaccination certificate. You will need one only if you’re arriving from an infected area (your health care provider may still recommend the vaccination). However, if you are going to Zanzibar, you will need to show a yellow-fever vaccination certificate if you have traveled through an endemic area. Hepatitis, typhoid and cholera are also present. We recommend against swimming — even wading — in any freshwater stream, river or lake, as bilharzia, a parasite that attacks internal organs, is present. Huge areas of Tanzania, including some wildlife parks, are infested with tsetse flies. Skin infections are common; even the smallest wound should be disinfected and bandaged. Be aware that Tanzania has one of the highest rates of HIV and AIDS infections in Africa.

Bring insect repellent containing the compound Deet and all prescription medicine needed for the trip. The sun can be very strong, so use sunscreen liberally and wear a hat.

We strongly advise you to contact the CDC [www.cdc.gov] or check with your personal physician for more information about your specific health needs while traveling, including any recommendations for immunizations. Vaccinations for yellow fever, hepatitis, typhoid, and cholera may be recommended, as well as anti-malarial medication.

Money:
The unit of currency is the Tanzanian shilling (sometimes pronounced shilling). Though reasonably stable, over recent years it has devalued at an average annual rate of about 10 percent to the U.S. dollar. Traveler’s checks in U.S. dollars and euros are easily exchangeable at banks and are accepted at most upper-range hotels, but private bureaux des changes (known locally as forex bureaux) exchange cash only. Local currency can be drawn at ATMs, which are relatively plentiful in major urban centers. The youngsters who lurk around touristy parts of Arusha and Dar es Salaam hissing “change money,” “best rates” and such are best ignored.
**Weather:**
Tanzania lies so close to the equator that seasonal variations in temperature are not extreme. The elevation in the north is such that it doesn’t ever get too hot. The weather is best June through September, and April and May are the rainiest months. Bring a heavy sweater and a windbreaker or jacket for evenings.

**Dress:**
People dress casually but conservatively in towns and cities, and women in particular are expected to dress modestly, which means high-cut tops that fully cover the shoulders and skirts that cover the knees. Local women seldom wear trousers, but it isn’t a problem for tourists to do so. Adult men can wear shorts if they so choose, but locals tend to view it as a bit childish.

*All information taken from Weissmann Reports, the World Factbook and Compassion International.*