



Volunteering with ELA

Mazembe village/Nkhata Bay (lakeshore) and in town Mzuzu
Malawi, Africa

EUROPE /USA/AUS- MALAWI

If you are flying from Europe, the cheapest flights are from UK or Italy to Malawian capital city Lilongwe, the ticket cost is about 800 € -1200 €. Airlines: British Airways, Kenya Airways.

When you arrive to Lilongwe, we will arrange a taxi pick up (15.000MWK) from the airport to hostel Mabuya camp (www.mabuyacamp.com). Taxi driver will also take you to bus station where you will buy bus ticket (Axa bus) to Mzuzu. The following day you will be picked from hostel and put on the bus to Mzuzu town, which will cost around 10000Mwk (1€7500Mwk).

If you will travel alone, without our assistance follow these instructions:

When you arrive to Mzuzu I, Jana Dular (Executive Director of ELA Org.), will be waiting for you at the main bus station. We will reserve a bed for you in William Koyi and have a local meal together. Next morning you will be taken around Mzuzu town, to the market, to buy some local fabrics out of which some skirts/trousers can be made. You will also go through introductory course for Ela's volunteers. Next day you will be transported to our project site (Mazembe) with ELA's car and your volunteering experience will begin.

❖ Malawian visa

There are multiple ways on obtaining Malawian Tourist Visa:

- Malawian Embassy in Berlin (Germany) or in Brussel (Belgium), for EU citizens, <http://www.malawiembassy.de/lang/index.php?lang=en&pid=3#13>
- for others search through google and find closest embassy to your hometown
The process can take up to 1 week. Documents should be sent to one of Malawian embassies via HDL.

Your Malawian Tourist Visa is valid for 3 months, but you will have to extend it after 30 days pass. At the Malawian border, a customs official will stamp your passport with 30 days permission to stay in Malawi. Visa extension can be arranged at any Malawian Immigration Office – the closest office with very friendly immigration officials is 1 hour from ELA's centre in Nkhata Bay. To extend your visa, you'll have to pay € 25.

❖ Health Insurance

We strongly recommend that you arrange health insurance for the duration of your trip to Malawi. There are multiple options for the tourist health insurance when travelling, please consult your local insurance office. It surely is worth the price.

❖ Vaccination and anti-malaria pills

In Malawi the **there are no mandatory vaccinations needed**. We advise vaccination against yellow fever, Hepatitis A&B, child-paralysis (polio), tetanus. It is wise to finish all your vaccinations shots 1 month before your trip, so your body can rest and adapt to the vaccines. 1 week before your journey to Malawi, you will have to start taking anti-malaria pills. Bring your yellow vaccination booklet with you. We strongly recommend taking anti-malaria pills, especially if this is your 1st trip to Africa, or if more than 12 months passed since your last trip and taking these drugs.

If you are coming to volunteer for up to 2 months (July and August), we advise you to take anti-malaria pills during the whole period of staying in Malawi and a week after returning home. There are a few different types of anti-malaria drugs; most commonly used are Malaron (you have to take one pill at the same time daily, they are quite expensive but with no/fewer side effects) and Lariam (one pill per week, much cheaper but with more potential side effects). In ELA's Centre every bed has a mosquito net, which is extra impregnated with repellents, so you don't need to carry one with you. There are mosquitoes that carry malaria bite from sunset to sunrise. If you put on trousers and long sleeved t-shirt at sunset and use some mosquito repellent, do not worry. We also have mosquito nets on all the windows of ELA's centre.

😊 Notice: But be at peace by knowing that Malawian pharmacies also have strong, powerful drugs for treating malaria. If you by any chance do get ill, Malawian doctors are true professionals in their field of work and will surely know how to help you, so do not worry. With first warning signs (slight fever, pains in your joints) we will take you to a local clinic where you will be tested for malaria and based upon received results, doctors will decide if we need to take you to Mzuzu hospital.

❖ Money and Credit Cards

There are international ATMs in Malawian town in Mzuzu (3 hours from ELA's centre), in the capital city Lilongwe. They take Visa card, Maestro and MasterCard. In every town you can find banks where you can exchange Euros, Dollars & also receive money through Moneygram or Western Union. You will get great rate for Dollars (issued in 2006 or later), better than for Euros (take banknotes from 20€ and more). You can exchange foreign currency at every bank or on the »black-market« (we will get you the information on the best rates 😊).

There are considerable changes in the exchange rates, average is as follows (Feb.2016)
1 € = 700Mkw, 1 \$= 650Mkw (Mkw=Malawian kwacha).

❖ Culture and guidelines

Dress code;

There are no specific guidelines for men, but there are some for women: it is recommendable to wear knee-length skirts. You can also wear knee-length shorts, trousers, jeans, summer dresses

without any problems ... T-shirts need to cover your stomach and back. They can be bare-shouldered, but the cleavage should not be too revealing.

Shopping;

Malawian culture does not know the concept of “personal space”, which means that you will be squeezed in the minibuses. When standing at cashier counter Malawians have the tendency to overtake you, if you are “too polite”. But there is a big difference when you are shopping at local markets. People give you space, time, they do not force any products on you, but patiently wait for your interests. They generally do not raise prices when seeing traveler/white person, maybe for a few Mkw, but never for 100% or more (as Tanzanians do all the time).

Language

Chichewa and English are official languages but local languages are spoken throughout the country, depending on the district.

In Nkhata Bay district, where we are located, Chitonga is spoken (Tonga community).

In ELA’s Centre we will organize language courses, so you will be able to communicate with local children and other residents.

People

Malawians are really opened, kind and joyful people with pure hearts. They will help you on every step, if you ask them for assistance. They will want to chat with you, always greet you nicely and want to know as much as possible about you. You can never be bored.

They are truly proud of the fact that Malawi is the safest African country; it is peaceful, safe to travel in big cities and on almost all beaches you can walk alone at night and nothing will happen.

»Mzungu

This is the word almost everybody will address you with. It simply means “white person”, so we advise you to get used to it as quickly as possible and don’t be bothered by it.

Don’t resent them; it is some sort of “positive discrimination” and you are always addressed with kind spirit. You will be also addressed as Madam or Miss or Mami (meaning a grown woman in Chichewa language). Of course there is a perception in everybody’s minds (Africans) that if you are white, you have money, loads of it, no matter who you are (student, unemployed or employed).

Many kids might ask you for money. Decide for yourself, how you will react. You can explain that you are already helping every day by being a teacher, so they can appreciate that. We personally do not give any money to any children - we give them food instead. Children do not know how to use the given to them money sensibly. Instead, you could buy them some bread, a pen, a pencil, a carton of milk and give it to them. They will highly appreciate the gesture and you will feel better too. But if you really want to give money, give it to women, they will always use it for their children/family, men will generally drink it away.

Don’t feel sorry for children in torn and filthy clothes. Their mothers dress them like this in the afternoon after they come home from school. They know they will instantly make them dirty with all the jumping and running around the dusty roads. For Sunday mass they have nicer clothes and also shoes (of course there are exceptions).

❖ Volunteering in ELA's educational centre

When to come and volunteer?

School Vacations:

Malawian school year is more or less identical to ours in Europe; starting in September and ending in June/July. They have three semesters. So the two-month summer school holidays in July and August are also Malawian school holidays and those are the months when we invite you to come and assist us at ELA's educational centre in Mazembe village. During holidays children visit ELA's centre even in larger numbers so we need every pair of hands and good heart to assist us in teaching those Malawian angels. From 9-12am we will run workshops of literacy, mathematics and English. From 2-5pm we will run workshops of sports, arts, social games. You will also be requested to assist us with our youth club activities in town Mzuzu with 130 youths.

Weather: From late January to early March there is a rainy season, which means a half-hour rain showers several times a day. May, June and July are considered to be colder months - a sort of European spring (around 25C), from August to December it is the dry season (heat over 32C every day).

❖ ELA's Educational Centre for children with special needs

ELA org. has project on 3 hectares of the land in the middle of the Mazembe village, only 400 m from the magical and crystal blue Malawian lake. When the purchase of land was officially recorded in the Malawian land register we started with the construction of ELA's centre in September 2012.

Centre is a house made of natural materials and locally constructed (locally made and burnt clay bricks, wood) surface of 140m². Half of the centre is designed as a workroom for children, where daily workshops are provided as additional educational support to children with learning difficulties, special needs and the place serves as a socializing area as well.

In one part of the centre there is a dining room, kitchen and bathroom facilities (shower, 2 toilets are constructed outside of the centre), followed by 4 rooms of 20m². The rooms are designed as sleeping quarters for volunteers (with 2 bunk beds in each room).

ELA is the only building in the entire village with electricity, we have 4 solar panels, which enable us to have power throughout day and night (charging phones, laptops).

Elementary school Mazembe and workshops in ELA's centre

660 school children attend Mazembe PS. We decided to extend our help and assistance to this school because of its convenient location (the school is located only 1.5 km away from the centre) and also because we feel the children there need more assistance in learning than the school itself can offer. We have been offering our assistance ever since the construction period of ELA centre (June 2012). We have started to actively implement the testing and evaluation capabilities of children and a variety of workshops in Mazembe PS.

As soon as the center became operational and occupied by ELA (June 2012), we immediately initiated a program of teaching, adapted for the purpose of helping children in Mazembe PS. Our focus has been mostly on children with difficulties in learning, are behind in knowledge, have been repeating grades and/or have a variety of special needs.

Since January 2012 for two years, Jana and Bernarda (Bernarda now leads administrative part of ELA in Slovenia), have been providing everyday meal to all 340 children in SEKA primary school (12 km away from ELA's centre). Children were not nourished sufficiently and did not attend school lessons, after everyday breakfast this has changed. After centre was built we have started to feed special needs children who have been coming to ELA's mandatory classes every morning for 3 hours.

Duration of volunteering:

We recommend that you come minimum for 2 weeks and maximum for 2 months (July and August) so that you gain as much experience as possible in order to independently teach and follow ELA's programs. In this time you can learn a little bit about Malawian culture, their lives and achieve tangible progress with children. If you come for less than 3 months, we will adjust the activities to a shorter time-frame. First, you will have orientation (learn about villages, nature, we will take you on a trip around the village - you can stay overnight at a local family's home, go snorkeling, have picnic on the beach) and then you can begin teaching at ELA's centre in the morning and afternoon (English, mathematics, reading, writing, sport and art classes)

Your work with children is mandatory (we have 2 Malawian teachers who are in charge of programs, but you will be their assistant) with youths and women is optional. If you have knowledge in special needs education you will be helping us in finding out what the best approaches are and ideas how to effectively teach for best results (creating teaching school materials, , adaptation of instruments for detecting various deficiencies). This is why we are looking for volunteers with profiles such as special educators, pedagogues, sports educators, psychologists and class teachers and related profiles. Yet they certainly are not a condition to come and help us.

Your working day:

The working day starts at 7.30am with breakfast provided by ELA. At 8.00 we will start preparing materials in order to teach children who will come from 9am-12pm each morning. Number can reach up to 300 children so every preparation is mandatory. Children are divided in groups and activities are given to them. IN the morning we will run literacy classes, English, reading, writing excercises, mathematics. At 1pm lunch will be cooked for you and at 2pm until 5pm children will return for afternoon activities (sport games, social games, reading books, watching cartoons, documentaries, doing theatre acts, art classes). If you will desire you can also help us with activities with youths in town Mzuzu, with some teaching classes on drama/theatre, singing, teaching English classes etc.

You are not obliged to participate on weekends activities, you can travel around Malawi (we can organize trips to tea and coffee plantation, snorkeling at nearby Kande island, organize trekking on local hills.)

If you are interested in volunteering please fill in the application form under www.elamalawi.org/volunteering and send it to bernarda.nemec@gmail.com or elamalawi@gmail.com After few days after you will receive further instructions from us

❖ Costs of food/meals + accommodation in ELA's centre

50€/week/person = Total for 21 meals in a week and accommodation for 7 days and costs for cleaning products/toilet paper etc.

➤ Breakfast options

Bread with butter, porridge, seasonal fruits, cooked sweet potato, tea with milk. Breakfast is ready at 7-7.30am by our cook Maggie.

➤ Lunch options

Rice with vegetable sauce, sweet potato/Iris potato/Kasava with tomato sauce or cooked beans, spaghetti/macaroni with soya sauce, Nsima (local corn polenta), fresh fish from the lake

➤ Dinner options

International dish: same as lunch +potato chips, sweet potato chips, soups, pancakes

☺ Reason for weekly charge of 50€ are expensive ingredients. Everything that is not "locally grown" is quite expensive (many ingredients have double even triple prices than in Europe) and can be bought only in Mzuzu (town 2 hours away from our centre) and in limited amounts.

Prices of some of the ingredients: cooking oil (1 liter=4€), brown sugar (1kg=1,5€), milk (1 liter=1,5€), powder milk (500g=5€)- fresh milk is hard to get, dozens of eggs =3€, flour (1kg=2 €), fruit jam (1kg=9€), honey (1liter=9€), spaghetti (0,5kg=1,5€), Distilled water 0,5liter = 0,5€ . In ELA's centre we will provide clean drinking water from a well. Other "delights": yogurt (1dcl=1€), chocolate (100g=4€), corn cereals (1kg=8€), chocolate cookies (200g=4€), ice-cream 1 scoop=2€, Nutella(400g=7€), juice in a box (1liter=3€). Snacks on the market: sweet/Irish potato chips, portion of nsima is 1€. Traditional meal in local restaurant in Mzuzu, which consists of nsima/rice/ with half fish or small piece of chicken/beef/pork/lamb is 3€. If you go to any other "foreign" restaurant (Indian, Italian, Chinese) you can't eat under 6-8€.

Accommodation

50€ per week per person also includes accommodation costs for 7 days in ELA's centre (3 rooms for volunteers). There are 3 rooms (20 m²) with 2 bunk beds in each. Our centre is the only building in the village with electricity, we use 8 solar panels, which provide us with electricity throughout all day and night (lights, charging phones and laptops)

(Price of hostels in the same area: the cheapest accommodation in nearby hostel is 7\$ for camping per night and 100\$ for renting a small 20m² chalet.)

Thank YOU in advance and you are warmly welcome to Malawi – The warm heart of Africa! ☺

If you are interested in volunteering with us, please write to bernarda.nemec@gmail.com and she

will forward you all documnets you need in order to become our volunteer and arrive safely to Malawi.