

HOME OF HOPE

MCHINJI CHILDREN'S HOME

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Dear Friend,

We are very happy that you have decided to come and visit us. We are looking forward to meeting you!

Home of Hope's success and growth has only been possible with the help of our friends all around the world.

This is your Visitor Information Packet. It is full of information to help you prepare for your visit here. **Please read these pages thoroughly** - they contain valuable information that will help you to best prepare for your trip here!

We receive many emails every week. We know you have lots of questions.... please give us grace in responding, we will do our best.

Visitors are responsible for their own travel arrangements. You should make your own way to us. Once you have your flight itinerary and plans, please email them to us as soon as you can! This will help us make sure we have a room and a warm welcome prepared for you!

We are here for you, so if you have any questions, please email us!

God Bless you

Home of Hope

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Visitor Information

This information has been compiled by previous visitors to help you. You will find it helpful to print it as part of your check list before departure. We strongly suggest that you bring a printed copy of this document with you.

Introduction

We have prepared this Visitor Information Pack to help you prepare for your trip to Mchinji, Malawi. We recommend you read it **thoroughly** before finalising your travel plans.

While life at the Home of Hope is comfortable, Malawi is a third world country. We have electricity, water and telephones here, but sometimes some or all of those things don't work. All sorts of things that are quick and easy in Western countries can be slow and difficult here, if they are possible at all. Of course, some things are much easier here. We want to help you make the most of your visit.

Frequently Asked Questions

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HOW DO I GET TO MCHINJI (BOOK MY FLIGHT)?

Mchinji is about a 1.5 hour drive from the capital of Malawi, Lilongwe.

You should book your flights to Lilongwe. As for everything in Africa, there are easier ways of doing things that sometimes seem harder initially.

- The safest option is to travel via Johannesburg. Visitors have also had success through Addis Ababa, Ethiopia using Ethiopian Airways.
- If you are travelling through Nairobi (Kenyan capital), we strongly suggest that you check your luggage through to Nairobi, then pick up your luggage in Nairobi and re-check it in at Nairobi. Your luggage is less likely to go missing or suffer long delays this way.
- If you are travelling through Dar es Salaam (Tanzanian capital), particularly in a large group, beware that luggage may be lost or delayed and you may find yourself stranded at the airport for days.

Travel within Africa is not the same as in Western countries. Some airlines are reliable, others are not. We recommend you use a travel agent experienced in booking African travel. If you have difficulties finding one, try searching the Internet for travel agencies in South Africa - they will be happy to help you. If you are travelling between countries, we recommend you fly, particularly if you are a woman. Flights within Africa are expensive, but your safety is more important. While Malawi is a stable and relatively safe country in Africa, we strongly recommend you do not take any form of transport, except taxis from a designated taxi stand, after sunset.

Bring with you some copies of your paper 'plane tickets, even if you have e-tickets. You are travelling in Africa, where most countries are third-world, without many of the computers and communication standards which many visitors take for granted. If you do not have your paper ticket, you will have to purchase another one!

If you are also travelling to other destinations, please ensure that all of your travel plans are finalised before you arrive here. There are limited options for making arrangements once you have arrived.

TIPS FOR WHEN YOU ARRIVE AT THE AIRPORT (ANY AIRPORT IN AFRICA)

Once you have your visa (see below), proceed to the baggage area. The baggage area is very small and often crowded, so keep valuables hidden and try to move quickly with your bags and simply walk out. There are sometimes a few trolleys at the airport, but unless you are very lucky, there will be a lot of people waiting for very few trolleys. The walk out of the baggage area is very short, so we recommend you just grab your luggage and walk out. You do NOT need to get in the customs line unless the customs official specifically stops you. It is really best to simply grab your bags and head for the door. Please be aware that if you let the very eager boys at the airport help you with your luggage, they will expect/demand a tip – and occasionally things go missing. Just say “no thank you” and keep a grip on your luggage.

Home of Hope is well known in Malawi, so if you are stopped and questioned about your luggage, simply tell them you are coming to visit us. Usually, they will let you straight through.

If you have sent us your flight information in advance, we can pick you up at the airport. We are a charity and fuel in Malawi is expensive, so we may ask you to pay our fuel for the trip - about \$USD40. We will be waiting outside the checking point doors for you.

Otherwise, you can take a taxi - this should cost about \$USD100. If the taxi driver doesn't know where

Home of Home, Mchinji, is, simply take another taxi. Almost everyone in Malawi knows us.

If we are running late, almost everyone in Malawi has a mobile phone- simply ask people standing around if you can make a quick one minute call on their phone, or just ask where the nearest phone bureau is. Once you are in Malawi, you can call: 0999 302 951 or 0999 330 277

HOW DO I GET A VISA?

Once you disembark the 'plane at Lilongwe airport, join the queue for non-nationals. The wait can be long, so if you can get off the 'plane quickly, this will help reduce delays. You will be given a free tourist visa for 30 days.

If you are staying for longer than that, before the 30 days expires, you will need to ask us to take you to the local immigration office. It will cost 5000 Kwacha (approx \$USD30) to have it extended for another 30 days. You can extend your visa twice in this way. If you are staying for more than 3 months, you will still need to get the initial visa (and extensions) this way. After that, you can get a 6-12 month visa.

A short form in English will have been given to you that has the following blanks to fill in. (PLEASE NOTE ANSWERS IN BOLD)

Surname

First Name

Passport Number

Validity (when your passport expires)

Nationality

Sex - M or F

Birthday

Country of Permanent Residence

Duration of Visit

Destination: **MCHINJI**

Address of Stay: **HOME OF HOPE**

Purpose of Visit/Trip: (Check only ONE): **TOURIST**

Means of transport: CIRCLE THE PLANE and PUT YOUR FLIGHT NUMBER

WHAT KIND OF ID SHOULD I BRING?

We strongly suggest that you bring at least one certified copy of your passport with you. This is a photocopy of your passport with a stamp of a notary, solicitor or justice of the peace on it. A photocopy without the stamp on it may not be sufficient. This will help you - it is much more difficult to replace the original passport than it is to replace a copy, should something happen to the original. Also, the copy will make replacement of the original much easier.

HOW MUCH LUGGAGE CAN I BRING?

This will depend on the airline you are flying and what country you are departing from. Typically, flights from North America have higher luggage allowances. Please be aware that your luggage allowance will typically vary between your internal African flights and your international flights.

It is **imperative** that you check your luggage allowances with your travel agent and also directly with the airline. Checking with the airline directly before finalising your tickets can help you buy a ticket more appropriate to your luggage requirements.

WHAT CAN I BRING TO DONATE TO HOME OF HOPE?

People often ask us what they can bring by way of donation. You can access our 'Wish List' on our website [here](#). We welcome your donations!

WHAT SHOULD I PACK?

CLOTHES:

You won't need many clothes. As long as your clothing is culturally appropriate, no one minds if you wear the same clothing every day here. Many locals only have one or two sets of clothes.

We dress in a way that is sensitive to Malawians. You may see other tourists who are not following these guidelines. We ask you to please follow our guidelines while you stay with us.

If you want to donate clothing, clothing is very cheap here - many visitors find it cheaper to buy clothing here to donate.

WOMEN:

Bottoms: Your knees must be covered at all times. Malawians generally wear loose fitting skirts or 'chitenje' (sarongs). Loose trousers are also acceptable on our base. Skirts/trousers should be thick enough to not see through when the sun shines on them.

Tops: Please consider modesty in the tops you wear. Please keep your stomach well-covered at all times. Low necklines and tops with spaghetti-straps should also be avoided. Straps on your sleeveless tops should be two-three fingers wide.

Swimwear: Please avoid swimwear that has low necklines or shows the stomach. We suggest a modest one piece swimsuit or a coloured T-shirt, with shorts that cover your knees or a sarong.

MEN:

Bottoms: Trousers should be loose fitting. Men do not generally wear shorts in Malawi. However, if you do wear shorts, please make sure they cover your knees (even when sitting).

Tops: Please avoid tight shirts. Your shirts should be on at all times except for at the beach.

Swimwear: Please wear swim shorts that come as low to the knee as possible. You may want to bring a shirt for swimming. The sun is very strong here and you can get sunburnt easily. It is ok to swim without a shirt.

CHURCH:

For church services and other times of ministry, the nationals wear their best. It is disrespectful to wear dirty or old clothes. Women should wear a dress or long skirt. Chitenje - traditional skirt wraps - can be bought here for about \$USD3-4.

The weather is warm-hot year round, but evenings can get cool (especially during the winter months-May to August-and the wet season-December to March), so bring a light sweater or jacket and a

raincoat. We ask that piercings be removed except normal ear-piercings and maybe a small nose ring for women. Never bring expensive jewellery or watches to Africa.

HELPFUL THINGS TO BRING:

- 1-2 rolls of toilet paper;
- small packets of tissues (can be used as toilet paper if needed)
- wet wipes
- bug spray with at least 30% DEET
- antihistamine cream, or other cream to stop itching
- anti-malarial medication
- a small medical kit
- sunglasses
- sunscreen (waterproof and 30+ SPF)
- hat
- sandals/flip flops
- tennis shoes
- Bible
- earplugs
- pen and paper
- flashlight/torch - a wind up one is best (batteries are poor quality in Africa)
- small container of detergent to hand wash your clothes
- umbrella or light rain jacket
- items specific to your dietary needs
- cheese
- trail mix
- power bars
- dried fruit
- Oral Rehydration Salts and/or sports drink powder
- board games, cards, something to occupy your evenings

Electrical outlets are UK three prong - 220 volts

Note: sheets, pillow and a mosquito net are provided.

The visitors centre and everything in it have been donated by visitors. From time to time, things break or we run out of them, so it is a good idea to bring some household items. Previous visitors have compiled a list of things you might like to bring for the centre, to view it please go to our [website](#).

WHAT KINDS OF EXPENSES CAN I EXPECT?

Your expenses depend on you.

Please be advised that visitors should reserve money (approx \$USD30) for departing taxes.

FOOD

You are welcome to eat with the children, but most visitors prefer to prepare most of their own meals. Our meals are very simple and reflect common Malawian food. Breakfast is a corn-based porridge with a cup of sweet milky tea. Lunch and dinner are both nsima (maize meal) with some sort of sauce (beans, ochre, fish, greens, etc.) **Important note regarding allergies**—peanuts and peanut, coconut, and sunflower oils are extensively used.

Most visitors prefer to cook most of their own food. They find African food sits heavy in their stomach. The visitor's centre kitchen has cups, plates, cutlery and some pots and pans, but you might like to bring anything else you need for cooking with you. It is a good idea to buy groceries in Lilongwe when you arrive. There is a market and small supermarket in Mchinji, where you can buy some vegetables and some groceries. Again, if there is anything you particularly want, we suggest you bring it with you.

ACCOMMODATION COSTS

Home of Hope is a faith-based ministry. Our orphanage depends on the generosity of the Lord's people. While we do not charge for your accommodation, we ask that you are sensitive to the many expenses related to your visit (including accommodation, meals, transport, etc.) Many of our visitors are very generous, financially, in terms of time/expertise and through gifts and supplies they donate to us.

GIFTS FOR CHILDREN

Please do not give gifts directly to the children without asking us. Our children currently enjoy the company of visitors. In some orphanages where visitors commonly give gifts to, or purchase items directly from, children, a begging culture has resulted. This makes life harder for everyone and much less enjoyable for visitors. If you feel prompted to give gifts to any children, please discuss this with us first.

Please give all donations of supplies and/or cash to our office. We will give you a receipt and, often, a letter of thanks. This way, we can ensure they are spent in line with our current priorities and needs. If you wish to designate a particular area to benefit from your contribution, we will honour your intention as much as possible. If you require a tax-deductible receipt for your donation, please send your donation directly to one of our [Partners](#) before or after your visit.

WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO BRING MONEY?

Please do not rely on only one form of money. We recommend that you bring **new** US dollars (with the large portrait and without any writing or ink stains) and a Visa credit card. Large bills are better than small (we get a better exchange rate for \$100/\$50). Euros, Pounds and the South African Rand are difficult to exchange here. Travellers' checks are also very difficult to use. Please do **not** bring them! Visa can be widely used with a pin number to get cash from ATMs, preferably located inside a bank.

WHAT HEALTH ISSUES SHOULD I BE AWARE OF?

Please check with a travel doctor for current recommendations approx 6-8 weeks before travel. Yellow Fever vaccine is required for entry through Dar es Salaam, Tanzania & Nairobi, Kenya. You should be up-to-date on standard vaccines such as tetanus, typhoid, Hepatitis A, etc. **Malaria prophylaxis is compulsory.** Some are daily pills, others are taken once a week. You must bring these medications with you. We will provide a mosquito net for you.

Due to drug interactions and other issues involving side effects and lack of travel insurance coverage for some of these side effects, we strongly suggest that do not use Larium malaria preventative medication.

Malerone and Doxycycline are most commonly used.

DO I NEED HEALTH INSURANCE?

Yes! All visitors **MUST** have comprehensive international health coverage and a copy of their policy with them. Please check that your insurance includes enough coverage for emergency life-flight. Most domestic insurance plans do not cover travel to foreign countries.

If you can't afford travel insurance, you can't afford to travel!

Ensure you have enough money available to cover any medical expenses up front. You must pay in full at our hospitals and clinics. Your insurance company will reimburse you after you file your claim.

WILL I BE ABLE TO COMMUNICATE WITH ANYONE FROM HOME?

Telephone and internet usage on the base is limited to staff only. No phone service (incoming or outgoing) is available to visitors except in emergencies. **Please do not promise to call home upon arrival!** Many visitors bring an unlocked triband mobile phone and purchase a local SIM card here, or buy a phone with a SIM card here.

If you bring your own laptop with wireless access *and* our internet is working, you may be able to use our internet connection. Alternatively, there are some internet cafés in town, but the Internet is very slow here.

WHAT WILL THE LIVING CONDITIONS BE LIKE?

Our visitor's centre was funded through donations. It consists of 4 bedrooms, each sleeping 2-5 people. In total, up to 12 people can be accommodated here. If your group is bigger than 12, there is plenty of grass around the visitor's centre to pitch your tent. There are 4 showers and 4 flushing toilets. If the water is not working for some reason, you will need to use buckets for bathing and flushing the toilets. There is a small kitchen, with a small fridge/freezer, and a dining/lounge area. Please be considerate of others.

It is important to realize that you will share your living space with other visitors from all over the world. Living in close community has its challenges. Sometimes it's noisy late at night or early in the morning (don't forget earplugs). Some people may not clean up after themselves in the kitchen; someone may drink your soda by accident, thinking it's theirs. However, living in close community can have its benefits as well; someone you just met stops what they're doing to pray with you. God uses someone to give you a word of encouragement or a prophetic word. You see God work through you and people you have just met. You exchange email addresses and keep in touch with people all over the world. As we cannot foresee what challenges and blessings your trip will hold, we pray that you will ask God to prepare your hearts with much consideration, patience, hope and flexibility!

HOW CAN I SERVE AT HOME OF HOPE?

Visitors must plan on being as self-sufficient as possible. Please be prepared to take initiative in finding opportunities.

It is not possible to list everything that you may be able to do while you are visiting us. Also available on our [website](#) is a document to help you prepare how you would like to serve here. Whatever you would like to help with when you're here, we suggest you bring anything you need with you (e.g. hammers,

musical instrument). It is not always easy, or indeed possible, to purchase things here.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF MALAWIANS ASK ME FOR THINGS?

Visitors who have stayed in other orphanages in Africa love the fact that our children don't ask for things. The children are happy to spend time with you, getting to know you, learning English, teaching you Chichewa... Please don't put this at risk by giving the children gifts without first asking our office. We don't want our children to associate visitors with material gifts!

We have an established system in place for people with legitimate needs. People from the community know they need to go to our office to discuss their need. If the request is of a medical nature, it is best to remind the person that the hospital down the road takes people regardless of their ability to pay. **Under NO circumstances hand out any over the counter drugs to anyone! This could be fatal in someone who may have an undetected allergy.**

WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT DURING MY FIRST FEW DAYS?

We are located on a hill and the weather is relatively cool for Africa, but most visitors are not used to the heat here. Many visitors will have travelled for a long time to reach us. It is not only the heat that is different - everything is different.

We suggest you spend your first few days here resting. Make sure you drink plenty of water and salt your food. Don't wait until you're thirsty. Even if you aren't hungry, eat at least 3 meals a day. You will sweat here and you need to replace the water and salt that you are sweating out. Many visitors find it useful to drink some electrolytes (sports drink or rehydration salts) every day.

Heat exhaustion can be an issue here. We suggest you avoid physical exertion during the heat of the day. Always wear a hat and sunscreen when you are outdoors when the sun is up, even early in the morning and late afternoon. Rest during the middle of the day if you are tired. Drinking enough, including salt and electrolytes, will help avoid heat exhaustion.

It is easy to get caught up in the things you can do here. But remember to set aside personal God time every day to rejuvenate yourself.

Important Note: We cannot guarantee your safety, health or comfort. Malawi is an underdeveloped country and conditions are unpredictable. God is our provider and protector. Once again, please plan on being as self-reliant as possible. We see again and again that God does amazing work in each visitor. Be open to what God may do with you here! He is good! Please take note of the contact numbers below and be sure to advise us if there are any last-minute changes to your arrival plans. It may be helpful to print these out and bring them with you so you can contact us at any point along your journey.

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