A speck of dust

There are no words that do justice to the experience of Bina's and my two-week safari in Tanzania from which we returned last Saturday. However, two Swahili phrases, perhaps, begin to capture the essence of my experience: "pole pole" (pronounced polay polay, meaning "slowly slowly"), and "hakuna matata" (no worries). From the moment our first guide, David, picked us up at the Kuro airstrip (literally a dirt air strip with a single building and "washroom"), my system started to slow down. David warmly greeted us in Swahili ("Jambo jambo!" – hello hello!), a table set up next to his Toyota Highlander, complete with tablecloth, tea and coffee, and pastries (including gluten-free for Bina), I felt myself begin to soften and slow down – Hakuna matata. No worries.

The exquisite vastness of the parts of Tanzania that comprised our safari, the Tarangire National Park, the Ngorongoro Crater, the Serengeti, with savannah and plains that expand into the infinite distance cast a magic spell over me – the spaciousness and quiet were a balm to what is typically my busy brain – pole pole, hakuna matata. This is a land that is nurtured by 128 tribes, living peacefully and cooperatively together, sharing beauty, spaciousness, and respect for the animals and their precious habitats.

And the animals – oh my gosh, absolutely extraordinary – the elegant gentleness of the giraffe loping gracefully along; the fierce dignity and nobility of the lion and lioness; the silly antics of monkeys and baboons – one of which joined us in the jeep for a bit; the wise protectiveness (and potential aggression) of the lumbering elephants complete with warning charge when we got too close, the wildebeests gathering together as far as the eye can see, migrating instinctively in the cycle evolution set out for them millennia ago, with their companions the zebra (Who decided to paint the zebra with brilliant black and white stripes, including stiped circles around their tails?). Not to mention the cheetah, hyena, ostrich, gazelle, warthog, hippo, dik dik, impala, antelope, mongoose, birds that are colorful beyond description, and so many more.

Embracing the enchanting beauty of the wilderness under the vast African sky, I realized how small I am in the scheme of things – a speck of dust in the vast universe. How important, truly, are my day-to-day worries and "problems"? Experiencing the serenity of the Serengeti, where the senses come alive and the sounds of nature serenade my soul, every moment was an awe-inspiring, unforgettable experience. An extraordinary privilege to have had this adventure. I am beyond grateful.

Pole pole, Hakuna matata.

Nancy