

Greetings from Kenya!

After nearly a month in the country, I can say that Kenya is beautiful and its people warm and welcoming. The culture is quite different from ours, but I am working to adapt.

Pre-service training with the Peace Corps is, I think, the hardest thing I have ever attempted. It consists of lectures and workshops on safety and security, medical issues, approach to development, self-care, to name a few. Add to that our practicum teaching (3 days a week at school) and intensive language instruction and you might conclude (correctly) that rest and relaxation are in short supply. While the time I spent doing Duolingo has been beneficial, I find that now, while I am fully occupied and usually tired, it is much harder to retain vocabulary.

On arrival in Kenya, PCTs (Peace Corps trainees) spent 5 days at Tom Mboya Labor College in Kisumu. As you can see from the photos, it's a lovely campus. One afternoon a group of us took a walk to Hippo point to get a glimpse of Lake Victoria, passing by (but not yet visiting) Impala Park, which is much like a zoo with all sorts of animals native to Africa. Except for two of us with white hair, most of the PCTs are smart, dedicated young folks in their 20s. All have been kind and generous in helping me set up and use the necessary technology.

After Kisumu we moved in with our home-stay families in various villages, mine being near the market town of Jebrok. My host family consists of Mama Florence (24 years younger than me), Baba Albert, 10-year-old Michelle, and (grandson) 1-year-old Karl, plus 3 older boys who live away from home. Mama Florence is a good cook and has accommodated my preference for fruits and vegetables over meat. My favorite foods here are fresh mangos and pineapple, cooked kale or cabbage, and omelettes. Ugali (maize pudding) is the staple, and it's good with goat meat. Four of us PCTs are teaching at the village high school, which is sponsored by my host family's church. Morning assemblies at our school begin and end with prayers! Then we observe local teachers at work, co-teach with them, or teach by ourselves.

My biggest adjustments so far have been sleeping under a mosquito net, using a squat toilet, and bathing from a bucket of lukewarm water. We were told of these things during the application process, but hearing and doing are not the same. Anyway, one of our mottos is "Adapt and overcome."

Finally I must inform you of Peace Corps policy that no pictures or text of our service should be posted on social media without prior approval (which I did not seek). These letters are for family and friends only. Thank you for respecting that.

Love to all,
Marie/ Minnie/ etc.