



SOUL SISTER
TRAVELS

crossing  thresholds

January 2022 Welcome Packet



"Go to the people... learn from them... love them. Start with what they know. Build with what they have. When the work is done, the task accomplished, the people will say 'We have done this ourselves.'" - Lao Tzu

Soul Sister Travels, in partnership with Crossing Thresholds, goes to the people, learns from them, and builds schools with them.

Come, and be a part of us.

crossing  thresholds



SOUL SISTER TRAVELS

Dear Friends,

We are honored that you are considering Soul Sister Travels (SST) and Crossing Thresholds (CT) for your travel adventure to Kenya. SST is partnering with Crossing Thresholds which is less of a business and more of a passionate commitment. Our shared goals for every volunteer are straightforward – exposure to another part of the world, dynamic cultural exchange and learning, and the opportunity to give your time and talents where they are needed.

At CT, the mission is to reclaim the original meaning of philanthropy – *a love for humanity that breeds familiarity, loyalty and generosity*. Wherever we live, whatever our ethnic or religious identity, and irrespective of our material resources, **we are all philanthropists**. We were born to locate ourselves in the give-and-take of life's unfolding; and we were born to try and create a safer and better world for future generations.

Our trips to Kenya are only 9 days in length, yet you will be amazed at how much you can see, how much you will learn, and how much you can accomplish in a short period of time. The schedule includes 4-5 days working in the Kibera Slum, with an option to extend your trip to include 3 day/2-night safari at one of Kenya's national parks. The experience in Kibera can be quite emotional, chaotic, and intense. It is not easy to make sense of the poverty, the squalor, and the frenzy of slum life. At the same time, you will be touched by the courage, resilience, and hope of children and adults alike who are working hard to improve their life circumstances.

At the end of each day, we will return to a clean and comfortable hotel where you will find electricity, running water, and mosquito netting. You can expect healthy and good meals. However, each volunteer should be reminded that we are traveling in Africa; there may be power outages, and hot water is never guaranteed. If these types of inconveniences are problematic, this trip may not be ideal for you.

Our pledge is to facilitate an unforgettable experience that will open your heart, challenge your thinking, and perhaps unleash your passion for philanthropy.

To help guide you in making an informed decision about joining a trip to Kenya, please see the enclosed documents regarding costs and sample itinerary.

With anticipation,
Carter Via





SOUL SISTER
TRAVELS

Trip Cost & Breakdown

Our trip fee of \$2,500 covers most of your expenses on the ground in Kenya including:

- Hotel Room in Nairobi (double occupancy)
- All Meals (there may be one or two meals that are not covered depending on group's desire to eat at a restaurant in Nairobi)
- Transfers to and from the airport
- Transportation to and from Kibera each day
- Visit to the Elephant Orphanage

***We do not cover the cost of flights.**

If you need assistance choosing your flights, do not hesitate to get in touch with us!

****Optional** 3-Day/ 2-Night Post Trip Safari**

The fee of \$950 per person includes:

- 2-Nights Lodging within the Maasai Mara Game Reserve (double occupancy),
- Transportation to the Great Rift Valley, Maasai Mara Game Reserve and return trip to Nairobi
- Full Day of game drives within Maasai Mara Game Reserve,
- All meals including a picnic lunch at the hippo pool
- Park Entrance Fees



Trip Preparation Form

- Purchase Flights
- Send flight itinerary to info@soulsistertravels.org
- Make sure your passport is valid for the next six months (Visa requirement)
- Write deposit check for \$500 (non-refundable) to *Soul Sister Travels*
- Fill out and mail in Disclosure Form, Release Form, and deposit check in attached envelope
- Check enclosed packing list
- Consult a physician, and/or get CDC recommended medications and immunizations:
<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/kenya>
 - Malaria medications
 - Yellow fever
 - Typhoid
 - Hepatitis A
 - Hepatitis B
 - Routine vaccinations: Meningitis, measles, mumps, rabies, polio
 - Covid 19 Vaccination is required along with a copy of vaccination card
- **Purchase an online VISA:** Please go online to acquire your visa prior to your travels. You can apply for a \$50 visa at <http://evisa.go.ke/evisa.html>
- **60 days before departure:** Mail in remainder of payment (non-refundable) (\$2,950 for adult, \$2,650 for student/family/group)
- **Depending on shopping interests bring \$100 – 300 in spending money.** If you need to take out more money while in Kenya, we will have access to ATMs



Contact

If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to call or email us:

Kathy: kathy@soulsistertravels.org Ph: 203-470-4016

Mary: Mary@soulsistertravelss.org Ph: 203-715-8584

Mailing Address: Soul Sister Travels, 63 Lincoln Lane, Ridgefield, CT 06877

Packing List

Our first suggestion is to travel lightly—you will be responsible for your own luggage throughout the trip and will probably want space to bring home gifts and other items from Kenya. Canvas or nylon duffel bags are recommended rather than hard luggage. And, you are advised to pack 1-2 days worth of essentials in your carry-on luggage in case your bags are delayed. As most airlines allow for two suitcases, it is our hope that you may be willing to carry a second bag on behalf of Crossing Thresholds that is filled with donations.

Of critical importance are your **passport, visa, plane ticket, medications, and spending money**. Depending on your shopping habits – you should bring \$100 – \$300 (or plan to take out cash at ATMs). 1 US Dollar is 100 Kenyan Shillings. Meals, transportation, and hotel costs are covered by the trip fee. Alcoholic beverages, single room requests, drinks outside of mealtimes, laundry, and extra hotel nights will incur additional charges.

For your general information, the weather is a comfortable 60-70°F. Though Kenya lies astride the equator, the higher altitudes create cooler temperatures – especially at night when a sweater or light jacket might be necessary.



SOUL SISTER TRAVELS

Personal Effects

- Small daypack w/ zipper
- Flashlight
- Camera
- Outlet adapter
- Towel and washcloth
- Toiletries
- Sunscreen
- Sunglasses
- Hat and/or bandana
- Insect repellent (20-35% DEET)
- Antibacterial wipes and/or Purell
- Journal and pen
- Water bottle
- Work gloves (if doing construction)
- Tissues/toilet paper (not always available in public restrooms)
- Prescription medications
- Lock for suitcase
- *Bedding and mosquito nets are provided**
- *Laundry is available at the hotel**

Clothing

- Sturdy walking shoes and socks
- Sandals or flip-flops for evening wear
- Sweater or sweatshirt
- Sweatshirt or rain jacket for safari (*sunrise game drive will be cold!*)
- 1-2 pair of work pants/jeans
- 2-3 pair of lightweight pants
- 1-2 pair of shorts (knee length)
- 5-6 T-shirts (not sleeveless)
- 1-2 skirts for women (cover the knees)

Optional

- Energy converter
- Overnight bag to pack clothes for weekend safari trip
- Paper, crayons, etc. for group activities with the students
- Granola/energy bars for snacks
- Cash for exchange, credit cards, and/or debit card (1 USD = approx. 100KSH)
- T-shirts, watches, hats, and bandanas

Trip Information

More about Kibera

The Kibera slum is home to roughly one million people. This unauthorized settlement on the outskirts of Nairobi, Kenya is the densest slum in Africa, and the second largest slum in the world. Since the Kenyan Government does not recognize the residents' right to live there, they do not provide local infrastructure. There is no sewage system, few schools, and even fewer medical facilities. CT has been bringing volunteers to work in Kibera since 2008, and leading work trips to assist our school-building projects on the ground.



Kibera Facts

Demographics

- Kibera has a population estimated at 1.2 million people living in a space that is about the size of central park, and is home to every ethnic group in Kenya.
- 75% of the population (900,000) is under the age of 18, and more than 500,000 under the age of 12. Kibera has more than 150,000 orphaned children.

Infrastructure

- Kibera is heavily polluted by human refuse, garbage, soot, dust, and other wastes. The lack of sanitation combined with poor nutrition among residents accounts for many illnesses and diseases.
- Homes are about 8' x 10' in size, and provide living space for families as small as 2 people and as large as 8 people.
- More than 50% of the adult population has no steady income, creating instability and desperation; malnutrition is rampant.
- Kibera has a severe lack of public services - clean water, sewage, public schools, health clinics, etc.

Education

- Most schools are non-governmental schools dependent upon charitable and private donations. These schools do not receive aid from the Kenyan government.
- Of the more than 500,000 school age children, nearly 40% of school age children are not in school (a disproportionate percentage are girls).
- Less than 15% of students who graduate from grade 8 have the opportunity to attend high school.
- Young people out of school are infinitely more susceptible to drug use/abuse and criminal activity; young women are more vulnerable to early pregnancy and the cycle of poverty.



History

- The slum originated in 1918 as a Nubian soldiers' settlement in a forest outside Nairobi, with plots allotted to soldiers as a reward for service in the First World War and earlier wars.
- The name "Kibera" is derived from a Nubian word (Kibra) meaning "forest."
- The Kenyan government owns all the land upon which Kibera stands, and turns a profit by selling long-term leases to slum landlords. Despite this, the government refuses to acknowledge the settlement -- denying funding for basic services, schools, clinics, etc.
- Since the early 1970s, slum landlords have rented out their property to an ever expanding number of tenants generating even more overcrowding and public health concerns.
- Tenants, many of whom live on the brink of acute poverty, cannot afford rental costs in Nairobi, and find themselves unable to escape life in Kibera.

Schools Sponsored by Crossing Thresholds

Drug Fighters School

Crossing Thresholds launched its first collaborative school-building initiative with grassroots leader, Agnes Musau. Agnes and CT worked tirelessly together for five years to transform an empty dirt lot into a school campus with ten classrooms, office space, a kitchen, dining hall, dormitory, and counseling center. Drug Fighters Primary School and Feeding Center now serves over 300 children in grades one to eight and, simultaneously, offers residential care to nearly 50 orphaned students.

Facing the Future School (FAFU)

In January 2011, CT established a partnership with Simeon Ajigo. Simeon's vision was to create a safe environment in Kibera for the children of single mothers. Simeon's vision quickly grew to include a preschool, primary school, health clinic, and community outreach program for at-risk teenagers in the slum. FAFU serves 350 children and provides each student with two meals per day. To further enrich the learning environment, CT helped launch a dynamic music program, a variety of sports programs, a technology center and much needed medical and therapeutic services.





SOUL SISTER
TRAVELS

MobJap Primary School

The MobJap Primary School has been built not once, but twice. Its founder and director, Asanya Bernard, began feeding and educating children many years ago. In 2016, the original school was built and dedicated. It was home to 350 children. In December 2017, a tragic fire swept through the neighborhood and destroyed Mobjap. For Asanya and the community, it was a devastating blow. Almost immediately, we began to fundraise for the purpose of re-building their beloved school. The outpouring of support turned into the Big Build – a 10-day Thresholds trip (June 2018) with 66 volunteers committed to a new and improved learning center for these kids. Sometimes, dreams come true.

Center of Hope Primary School

In 2017, we discovered the inspired community leader, Isabel Omondi. In a small rented house, Isabel was feeding and educating nearly 100 children (nursery school through 4th grade). The space was cramped, but bright and positive. With a vision for encouraging imaginative and critical thinking, Isabel implemented her own hybrid curriculum –conjoining elements of the Montessori approach with standard Kenyan subjects. Acknowledging her desire to build a much bigger school and expand her impact, CT has purchased a piece of land in Kibera and is eagerly anticipating the construction of a new school to support Isabel and serve the children in her school

Crossing Thresholds High School, Nyeri District, Kenya

With less than 10% of Kibera’s graduating eighth graders able to pursue high school education, CT saw the construction of this high school as imperative. The school campus was built approximately two hours north of Nairobi in the Nyeri district of Kenya, with a boarding facility to give students the chance to learn and grow outside the Kibera Slum. The first class graduated from the high school in 2019 and the school is continuing to offer a full high school curriculum to children from Kibera.



SOUL SISTER
TRAVELS

Crossing Thresholds

Organization Policies / Behavior Contract

Dress Code

Your attire is an important way of showing your respect to people of a different culture. When packing for your trip, please keep in mind that while working in Kibera, all attire MUST be modest and unrevealing for all.

Alcohol and Drug Policy

Crossing Thresholds adheres to a strict drug and alcohol policy. No one under the age of 21 is permitted to consume alcohol. No illicit drug use will be tolerated. At all times, trip participants are expected to follow the rules of conduct that protect the interest and safety of our volunteers and the communities where we serve. Failure to comply may result in being sent home at the participant's expense.

Age Limits

Crossing Thresholds does recognize age restrictions. With more than 10 years of experience and a commitment to protect the quality of our trips for all participants, one must be 16 or older to travel independently with SST and CT. Under the age of 16, children must be accompanied by an adult with the youngest age being 14 years old. Special consideration may be granted to children 12-13 years if accompanied by a parent or guardian.



Soul Sister Travels & Crossing Thresholds Inc. – Kenya Trip
Agreement and Release

Trip Dates: _____

This document is a legally binding release, which, in certain situations, will reduce or eliminate your legal rights and legal recourse. Please read it carefully before signing.

This AGREEMENT and RELEASE is between _____

(“Participant”) and Soul Sister Travels, LLC (SST) & Crossing Thresholds, Inc. (CT). This Agreement and Release is entered into in connection with the program sponsored by SST and CT, which provides the opportunity for Participant to travel to Kenya to engage in volunteer service and cultural exchange. Participant enters into this Agreement and Release in consideration of the opportunity to participate in the Program and for other good and valuable consideration, the sufficiency of which the parties acknowledge

Participant acknowledges that the Program involves travel to a developing country with a possibly unstable political system and differing cultural expectations and practices. Participant acknowledges that there are risks inherent in such trips, including, but not limited to, forces of nature, accident or illness in remote places without immediate access to adequate medical facilities, a lower standard of sanitation, job site injury, and travel by air, automobile, truck, on foot or by other conveyance. Participant assumes all the risks of the Program, including health and personal safety risks, and waives all claims for loss or injury to person or property while participating in any of the activities contemplated thereby, whether such loss or injury results from the negligence of SST, CT or its officers, directors, employees, liability insurance carriers or agents, or from some other cause. Therefore, in consideration of the right to participate in the Program, and of the services, food and transportation arranged by SST and CT and its agents and associates, the undersigned Participant, intending to be legally bound, consents to the assumption of such risks, and agrees to forever waive,





SOUL SISTER
TRAVELS

discharge and release for Participant and Participant's heirs, executors, and administrators, all rights and claims for injuries, damages, illness, losses, demands and other actions of every kind and nature whatsoever, which Participant may have against SST, CT or its officers, directors, employees, liability insurance carriers and agents and all of those entities' representatives, successors and assigns, resulting from or in connection with the Program or any other activities arranged for Participant by SST, CT and/or its agents and associates.

Signature: _____

Date: _____



SOUL SISTER
TRAVELS

Soul Sister Travels & Crossing Thresholds Inc. – Kenya Trip

Personal and Health Information Disclosure

- Please let us know of any physical limitations or medical conditions which may, for any reason, interfere with your ability to fully participate in the program.

Trip Dates:

Name (as it appears on your passport):

Mailing Address: -----

City -----

State ----- Zip -----

Home Phone: -----

Day Phone/Cell: -----

Preferred E-Mail: -----

Passport #: -----

Expiration Date: -----

Issuing country: -----

(Please note- Passport must be valid for at least 6 months from date of departure!)





SOUL SISTER
TRAVELS

- Do you have any **medical or surgical condition(s)** that require you to see a physician regularly?

Yes If yes, please explain: _____

No

- Have you had any **medical condition** which is now stable, but which may recur while traveling?

Yes If yes, please explain: _____

No

- Do you have any **physical limitations?** (i.e. impaired vision, hearing, breathing, mobility, etc):

Yes If yes, please explain: _____

No

- Do you have a **history of mental or emotional instability** for which you have sought medical attention?

Yes If yes, please explain: _____

No

- Are you currently **under the care of a physician** for any of the above-mentioned conditions?

Yes If yes, please explain: _____

No



SOUL SISTER
TRAVELS

- Please list all **medications** that you are currently taking; both prescription and over-the-counter and the reason for taking the medication(s):

- Please list all **allergies** that you have (including medication, food, environmental, etc.), or indicate none:

- Please indicate if you have any special **dietary restrictions**:

- **Personal Physician Name:**

Phone Number: -----

- Your current **health insurance policy**:

Company: _____

Policy #: _____ Group #: _____

Name of Insured: _____ SSN# of policy holder: _____

- We highly recommend that you purchase **emergency medical evacuation insurance**.



SOUL SISTER
TRAVELS

Have you purchased emergency medical evacuation insurance?

Yes No

Please provide the name of the policy:

EMERGENCY CONTACT:

Name:

Address: -----

City: -----

State: ----- Zip: -----

Home Phone:

Day Phone/Cell: -----

I affirm that all the above information is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge.

I understand the health risks involved in traveling to a developing country. I consider myself in good mental and physical shape.

Signature: _____

Date: _____