Please Note
Throughout the Volunteer Handbook, text (but not section headings) in blue and green are hyperlinks either to other sections or to external websites.

Postal Address
RIPPLE Africa
c/o Mwaya Beach
P O Box 75
Chintheche
Nkhata Bay District
Malawi

Location
Mwaya Beach is close to Matete, which is 80km north of Dwangwa, 7km south of Kande, and 25km south of Chintheche, in the Nkhata Bay District of Malawi (see the map at the end of this section).

General Information
Malawi is a pretty safe country and its people are some of the friendliest you are likely to meet in Africa. However, as with any country in the world, the cities and towns in Malawi have their fair share of con artists and thieves, and our advice is to be sensible about carrying money and valuables, as you would be in cities in the West. It is important to bear in mind that Malawi is one of the world’s poorest countries and, although US$1 is not a fortune to us, it is the average daily wage for a Malawian — if they are lucky enough to have a job. This being said, we have never felt threatened by anyone in Mzuzu, Lilongwe and Blantyre — there is just the annoyance of people coming up and trying to sell you anything from wood carvings to windscreen wipers!

Most of our volunteers arrive in Malawi on a flight to Lilongwe, but a few have flown to Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, caught the train to Mbeya, and then crossed the border into Malawi just north of Karonga. We do not have much information about this route but have included a short section at the end of this document giving details about the route from Karonga to Mwaya Beach via Mzuzu and Nkhata Bay.

Safety Concerns
Travelling to Mwaya Beach
You will be met by a member of RIPPLE Africa’s staff when you get off the bus at the Matete Police Roadblock and accompanied to Mwaya Beach. Please remember that you may arrive in the dark, so we advise you to keep your headtorch somewhere easily accessible.

Please send a text message to Dan (Volunteer Projects Manager) on 0996 960005 / 0994 697661 / 0884 336969 or Morton (Mwaya Manager) on 0996 960004 / 0999 455965 / 0881 565900 to let them know when you arrive in Lilongwe and when you will be catching the bus to Mwaya. Dan will phone you to let you know who will meet you when you get off the bus at the Matete Police Roadblock.

You may also have a number of local children of varying ages offering to help you with your bags. Please do not give them money or sweets, etc., as “payment” for helping you as this will encourage them to ask for money or sweets from other volunteers and visitors in the future.

General Safety
Although some of our volunteers have said that they were a bit nervous about their personal safety before they got to Mwaya, they found that everything was fine once they arrived. In fact, quite a few of them have said that they felt safer walking around the local area after dark than in a town or city in their home country at night!

The local people are very used to seeing foreigners (mzungu (sing.) or azungu (pl.) — literally, white person or white people) in the local area. You will find a number of children and young people may attach themselves to you and will be happy to show you the way to wherever you are going. There are houses dotted around everywhere so it is not as though you are in the wilderness, and there are no dangerous wild animals — they have all been
killed or driven away by the number of people living in the area. Everyone in the area knows about RIPPLE Africa and the help we are giving their communities, and quite a number of them are employees of the charity too. Since we started the volunteer programme in 2003, we have had over 350 volunteers, and nothing unpleasant has happened to any of them.

**FLIGHTS TO AND FROM MALAWI**

**To Malawi**

*Kenya Airways* (which is part of the SkyTeam group of airlines which includes *KLM* and *Air France*) flies to Lilongwe via Nairobi, *South African Airways* flies to Lilongwe via Johannesburg, and *Ethiopian Airlines* flies to Lilongwe via Addis Ababa. You can usually book online with these airlines, although you will have to use a travel agent (see paragraph below) if your travel plans are more complicated than booking a return flight to Lilongwe.

It is worth noting that both *Kenya Airways* and *Ethiopian Airlines* have generous baggage allowances on their flights from London to Lilongwe of a total of 46kg (two bags weighing a maximum of 23kg each) per passenger in Economy class and of a total of 64kg (two bags weighing a maximum of 32kg each) per passenger in Business class.

It is difficult to recommend a particular travel agent, although *Trailfinders* and *Flight Centre* in the UK are very good, but they have no online booking facilities (visit their websites to find the relevant phone numbers). It is important to go with whoever gives the most personal attention and makes the most effort to find the best deal. Most budget/student ticket agencies and airlines are now accustomed to catering to ‘open-jaw’ tickets — flying into one destination and out of another.

Please note that it is very important to take out good travel insurance when purchasing your airline ticket so that, if you are unable to travel to Malawi due to a medical problem, for example, you can get a refund on your ticket.

**FROM THE AIRPORT TO LILONGWE**

The airport is about 20km north of the centre of Lilongwe. There are no buses from the airport to the centre of Lilongwe, so you have to take a taxi into town (please refer to the Taxis section later in this document). They cost about US$30, and you might be able to find other people just off the plane who are interested in sharing the cost of one. Alternatively, some of the accommodation listed below will do an airport transfer if you book it in advance, or if you would like us to arrange a taxi with a company that we know and are reliable, let us know a week before your departure.

To help you find your way around Lilongwe, we have included two maps — a general map showing the modern centre of Lilongwe (called Capital City) and the Old Town, and a detailed map showing the Old Town in more detail.

**Accommodation in Lilongwe**

Because most international flights arrive either late morning or early afternoon, and the bus going up the lakeshore road or to Mzuzu leaves early in the morning, it will be necessary to spend at least one night in Lilongwe. There are a number of places to stay, and below is a list of some we know about. Please note that the prices quoted may be out of date, so it is advisable to be prepared to pay more. Alternatively, you could send an e-mail asking for the current tariff before you book your accommodation.

**Budget Option:**

**Mabuya Camp**

Contact Details: Website: [www.mabuyacamp.com](http://www.mabuyacamp.com)

E-mail: info@mabuyacamp.com or bookings@mabuyacamp.com

Tel: +265 (0)1 754978

Mobile: +265 (0)999 514245

Mabuya Camp is a little way from the centre of the old part of Lilongwe but is within walking distance. It is in the same area as but a bit further out than the Korea Garden Lodge (see below). It is owned and run by a couple called Tom and Janey, and we do advise you to book your accommodation in advance because they get very busy. There is a real buzz at the Camp with lots of independent travellers and groups staying there, and they do good, reasonably priced food. Their rates are affordable (please see their website).

**Middle-end Option:**

**Kiboko Town Hotel**

Contact Details: Website: [www.kibokohotel.com](http://www.kibokohotel.com)

E-mail: reservations@kiboko-safaris.com

Tel: +265 (0)1 751226
Kiboko Town Hotel (formerly the Imperial Hotel) has been renovated and is right in the centre of the Old Town. It is a bit more pricey than some of the other options (about US$65 per room per night bed and breakfast), but it is a nice place to stay. All rooms are en suite, and a simple breakfast of fresh fruit, toast with fried eggs, fruit juice and tea or coffee is included in the price of the room. There is a very nice bar area on the first floor, and a balcony runs the length of the front of the hotel where you can sit and watch life go by in the street below you. Breakfast is served in the peaceful courtyard at the back of the hotel which is dominated by an enormous old frangipani tree, and you can also get light lunches here. For dinner, you can eat at Don Brioni’s restaurant which occupies part of the ground floor of the hotel building. Check on their website for their rates and for further details.

Kiboko Safaris
Contact Details: Website: www.kiboko-safaris.com
E-mail: bookings@kiboko-safaris.com
Tel: +265 (0)1 751226
Mobile: +265 (0)999 878685

Kiboko Safaris run very good and reasonably priced safaris to destinations in Malawi and Zambia. Quite a few of our volunteers have taken safaris to South Luangwa National Park and/or Victoria Falls in Zambia, and they have had a great time. Some volunteers have travelled to Liwonde National Park, Mount Mulanje, Vwaza Marsh Game Reserve and Nyika plateau in Malawi with them as well. If you are planning a trip before, during or after your placement, you should definitely look at their website before you leave for Malawi to give you an idea of the tours they do and the costs. Their office is situated in the Kiboko Town Hotel building.

Another Option:
Korea Garden Lodge
Contact Details: Website: www.kglodge.net
E-mail: info@kglodge.net
Tel: +265 (0)1 753467 or +265 (0)1 757854 or +265 (0)1 759774
Fax: +265 (0)1 756612

This lodge is closer to the Old Town centre than Mabuya Camp, and is an easy walk to and from the town. They have different grades of rooms — Bronze, Silver, Gold, Executive, and VIP — and, although the Bronze and Silver rooms are basic, they are fairly clean and adequate if a bit shabby. Full details of their rooms, rates (breakfast included), etc., are on their website, and again we do recommend booking in advance as they can get quite busy. They also do airport transfers.

FROM LILONGWE TO MWAYA
The most popular (and cheapest) way to travel from Lilongwe to Matete is by bus or minibus. The buses and minibuses are safe — albeit crowded with people, children, animals, luggage, etc! — and travelling on them is an experience you should not miss.

Matete is located on the M5 lakeshore road and is the closest village to Mwaya Beach. Conveniently, it has a police roadblock which means all traffic has to stop there. It is worth noting that there are three police roadblocks on the lakeshore road, and they are at (going from south to north) Nkhotakota, Matete, and Nkhata Bay.

Buses
A bus service called AXA operates a route between Lilongwe and Mzuzu along the Lakeshore Road (M5) via Salima, Nkhotakota, Dwangwa and on to Matete village. The service runs every day of the week, including Sundays. The buses are slightly better than many African buses, and you will have more chance of getting a seat than if you travel by minibus. The buses depart from the bus station which is near the mosque in the Old Town, and it is probably best to book a taxi to take you there if you are not sure where it is.

Warning! There is a small town called Namitete (which sounds like Matete) about 50km west of Lilongwe on the road to the border with Zambia. The bus station is a very hectic place with people trying to push you onto their buses, and some volunteers have been put on a bus which has taken them to Namitete instead of Matete. This has meant that they have had to stay in Lilongwe for an extra night. As many people in Lilongwe will not have heard of Matete, make sure you make it clear that you want to travel up the lakeshore road towards Chintheche and Nkhata Bay via Salima and Nkhotakota.

The bus for Mzuzu is meant to leave at 8.00am, but can leave any time between 7.00am and 10.00am. Therefore,
we advise you to get to the bus station no later than 7.00am to be sure to catch it and even earlier if you want to get a seat. It stops quite regularly on the journey and, although you should reach the roadblock at Matete by around 6.00pm if there are no holdups or breakdowns, it is more likely you will arrive after dark so remember to have your headtorch handy. The cost of a ticket, which you buy on the bus, is MWK4,200 (about £6 or US$9).

If you are going back to Lilongwe, you can catch the AXA bus at the Matete roadblock. It arrives at the roadblock anywhere between 7.00am and 11.00am — most volunteers get to the roadblock by 6.30am — and it reaches Lilongwe around 5.30pm. The cost of a ticket is the same as the journey from Lilongwe (i.e. MWK4,200) and, again, you pay for your ticket on the bus.

Please note that it is quite normal for the police at a roadblock to ask everyone to get off the bus while they check it. Also, the buses do not make any loo stops, so keep your liquids intake to a minimum for the journey. If you are hungry en route, there are usually vendors selling samosas, hard boiled eggs, bananas, etc., at each stop the bus makes, so make sure you have some small denomination kwacha notes or coins with you.

**Minibuses**

Minibuses also go up the lakeshore road from the bus station in the Old Town, which is located near the mosque — again, it is probably best to book a taxi to take you there if you are not sure where it is — and we advise you to be at the bus station early in the morning (around 7.00am). The minibuses get very full and are not as fast as the AXA bus, and you will probably have to change minibuses regularly (you will definitely have to change at Salima to catch a minibus going up the lakeshore road). Assuming they do not have too many flat tyres, and you do not have to change minibuses more than three times, they will get you to the Matete roadblock the same day but possibly after dark. They will cost you about £6 or US$10, and you will have more of an African bus experience than on the AXA bus.

**Taxis**

If you travel by taxi anywhere in Malawi (i.e. from the airport to Lilongwe, while you are in Lilongwe, or for the journey to Mwaya Beach), you must negotiate a price for the journey before you get into the vehicle. The price of fuel is going up all the time but, as a guide, a taxi from the airport to the Old Town in Lilongwe will cost about MWK14,000 (£20 or US$30).

Instead of travelling by bus or minibus, you could take a taxi direct to Mwaya Beach which costs US$200. If you decide you want to travel up to Mwaya Beach in a taxi, the contact details for some companies in Lilongwe are as follows:

- **Sheju Car Hire & Taxi Services**
  - Mobile: +265 (0)999 510140 or +265 (0)888 857576 or +265 (0)999 511896
  - E-mail: shejucarhire@ymail.com
  - (Shem, the owner, is very reliable, and we can highly recommend his taxi service. His driver, Chico, is also reliable and a good driver. Shem charges US$200 for a normal car and US$230 for a seven-seater taxi.)

- **J&K Car Hire**
  - Tel: +265 (0)1 756591 or +265 (0)1 759564 or +265 (0)1 759565
  - Mobile: +265 (0)999 950496 or +265 (0)999 941634 or +265 (0)999 952800
  - E-mail: jkcarhire@globemw.net

- **Sputnik Car Hire**
  - Tel: +265 (0)1 758253
  - Mobile: +265 (0)999 967771
  - E-mail: sputnik@sdnp.org.mw
  - Website: [www.sputnik-car-hire.mw](http://www.sputnik-car-hire.mw)

- **Force Ngwira’s Car**
  - Mobile: +265 (0)996 960003
  - E-mail: ngwiraforce@rippleafrica.org

In addition to the above, **Force Ngwira** (RIPPLE Africa’s Environmental Programme Manager) hires out his Toyota Noah with an automatic transmission which seats nine people. The rates are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily rate</td>
<td>US$25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily insurance rate</td>
<td>US$5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total daily rate</strong></td>
<td><strong>US$30</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plus cost per km</td>
<td>US$0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car fuel tank</td>
<td>Delivered and return with half full to full tank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driver</td>
<td>US$5 per day plus meals and accommodation costs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Airport pickup and return to Mwaya... US$200
Meet at airport and hire......... US$100

FROM MATETE TO MWAYA BEACH
The buses and minibuses stop at the police roadblock at Matete, and Mwaya Beach is then about a 2.5km walk down the dirt track to the lakeshore (please read the information at the beginning of this document).

FROM TANZANIA
A few of our volunteers have flown to Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, caught the bus or train to Mbeya, and then crossed the border into Malawi just north of Karonga. As there are no trains in Malawi, you will have to use buses and minibuses to get to the border from Mzuzu. The route passes through Karonga and Chitimba (which is at the bottom of the escarpment where Livingstonia is situated) to Mzuzu. From Mzuzu, you will need to get a bus, minibus or matola (usually a Toyota or Isuzu pickup) to Matete. However, this may not take you all the way, and you may need to change in Nkhata Bay or Chintheche, or both.

TOWNS AND VILLAGES LOCAL TO MWAYA BEACH
Please note: It is difficult to give exact figures for the cost of local transport as fuel in Malawi is as expensive as it is in the West and prices go up regularly. Please use these fares as a guide and allow extra money if you are going to travel a lot during your placement.

Mzuzu
Mzuzu is the largest town in the Northern Region of Malawi, and it has Banks with ATMs, shops, internet, accommodation, and the Immigration Office. Mzuzu is 120km from Mwaya, and 40km inland (west) from Nkhata Bay. Set in the Viphya Mountains, the air is crisp and there is a pleasant atmosphere. At the west end of town there is a huge open market selling everything from food (fish, fruit, vegetables, etc.) to spare auto parts, and this is also where the bus station is located. To reach Mzuzu from Matete, you can catch a matola or minibus from the police roadblock. The fare from Matete is about MWK2,500 (£3.60 or US$5.60) each way, and the journey takes about two and a half hours.

If you want to stay in Mzuzu, we can recommend Joy’s Place which is close to Shoprite (see map). Joy is Korean and is the wife of Justin who runs the Aquanuts dive school at Kande Beach Campsite. Joy’s Place is a hostel and restaurant, and Joy prepares good Korean food.

Nkhata Bay
Built around several small bays on rolling hills, Nkhata Bay is a bustling, potentially picturesque port town with a market, superette, several craft and curio stalls, and a handful of other guest lodges and restaurants. However, it is very dirty and run down now. It is the government administrative seat for the District, and there is an Immigration Office there as well where you can extend your Visitor’s Permit. The port is the departure point for the ferry to Likoma and Chizumulu islands, Rurawe and Usisya, which are inaccessible by road and highly recommended for a visit, and Mbamba Bay in Tanzania. It is also a very popular place for budget travellers. Nkhata Bay is 60km north of Mwaya. The fare from Matete to Nkhata Bay is about MWK1,500 (£2.10 or US$3.30) each way, and the journey takes about two and a half hours.

Chintheche
Chintheche is the nearest town to Mwaya Beach and is 25km away to the north. It is convenient for its post office, shops, small hospital, and superette. There is also a restaurant called “Mums” which is very popular with volunteers as it is clean and does good meals of chicken (fried or curry) and chips for about MWK1,200 (£1.70 or US$2.70). Chintheche also has the nearest substantial market and electricity. The fare to Chintheche from Matete is about MWK600 (£0.86 or US$1.33) each way, and the journey takes about an hour.

Kande
Kande is about 7km from Matete travelling north. It has a small market, some shops, and a health centre. The fare to Kande from Matete is about MWK300 (£0.43 or US$0.67) each way, and the journey takes about 10 minutes.

Kachere
Kachere is about 7km from Matete travelling south. It is smaller than Kande and has a few shops and a health centre. The fare to Kachere from Matete is about MWK300 (£0.43 or US$0.67) each way, and the journey takes about 10 minutes.
MAP OF MALAWI
The map of Malawi reproduced below also shows south Tanzania, east Zambia, north west Mozambique, and north east Zimbabwe.
GENERAL MAP OF LILONGWE
DETAILED MAP OF THE OLD TOWN IN LILONGWE

- Accommodation
  1. Mabuya Camp
  2. Kiboko Town Hotel
  3. Korea Garden Lodge
  4. Sunbird Lilongwe Hotel

- Restaurants
  5. Mama Mia (Italian restaurant in Old Town Mall)
  6. Huts (Indian restaurant)
  7. Don Erioni's (near Kiboko Hotel)

- Supermarket
  8. Shoprite

- Banks
  9. Standard Bank
  10. National Bank of Malawi
  11. First Merchant Bank

- Other Places
  12. Post Office (and curios)
  13. Naco Centre (other shops, pharmacies, etc.)
  14. Lilongwe Golf Club
  15. Bus station
  16. Mosque
  17. Shopping Mall
     (Game, Spar, Pizza Inn, and more)

- To Likuni:
  Mabuya Camp
  (about 1km from town centre)

- Lilongwe River

- Old Town

- To Dedza, Zomba, and Blantyre

- KAMULU PROCESSION ROAD
  - PAUL NYANGAYA ROAD
  - KENYATTA ROAD

- Shoprite

- Ebus station

- To Dedza, Zomba, and Blantyre
MAP OF MWAYA

PLEASE NOTE: THIS MAP IS NOT TO SCALE

Approximate Distances
- Mwaya Beach to police post = 2 km
- Police post to Mzambe Secondary School = 3 km
- Mzambe Secondary School to Mzambe Primary School = 5 km
- Mzambe Primary School to Mazende Primary School = 8 km
- Mazende Primary School to Chirungu = 9 km

RIPPLE Africa Volunteer Handbook: Getting to Mwaya Beach
December 2015

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B.9 RIPPLE Africa — Providing a Hand Up, Not a Hand Out