

GETTING TO MWAYA BEACH

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.

GENERAL SAFETY CONCERNS

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.

FROM LILONGWE TO MWAYA

The cheapest way to travel from Lilongwe to Matete is by bus. The buses are safe — albeit crowded with people, children, animals, luggage, etc! — and travelling on them is an experience you should not miss. If you opt to get the bus from Lilongwe to Matete then please note that you'll need to stay overnight in Lilongwe as the bus leaves early in the morning. More information further down.

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 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.

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 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 and you pay 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.

What to do before arriving at Matete

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. From the police roadblock at Matete it is a 2.5km walk down the dirt track to the lakeshore.

Please send a text message to **Dan** (Volunteer Projects Manager) on **0996 960005 / 0998 043002 / 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.

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**.

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 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. To get up-to-date prices, and to book, contact them directly.

Budget Option:

Mabuya Camp

Contact Details: Website: 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. 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

E-mail: reservations@kiboko-safaris.com
 Tel: +265 (0)1 751226
 Mobile: +265 (0)999 838485

Kiboko Town Hotel moved to a new building in 2019. It is 10 miles/16 km from the airport and only 2.5 miles/4 km to the City Business Centre. It is a bit more pricey than some of the other options but it is a nice place to stay and all rooms are en suite. 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 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. 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.

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 MWK18,000 (£20 or US\$30).

Instead of travelling by bus, 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, we recommend Sheju Taxi Services, and we can book it for you.

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 son Lamson is the driver, and he is also reliable and a good driver. Shem charges US\$200 for a normal car and US\$230 for a seven-seater taxi.)

Car hire

In addition to the above, **Force Ngwira** (RIPPLE Africa's Environmental Programme Manager) and **Morton Banda** (Mwaya Manager) hire out their vehicles. Some volunteers choose to hire a vehicle for weekend excursions or day trips. Email Nikki for rates.

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 from the border to **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. It is a long journey and volunteers who have done this journey have recommended staying a night in Mzuzu.

MAP OF MALAWI

The map of Malawi reproduced below also shows south Tanzania, east Zambia, north west Mozambique, and north east Zimbabwe.



Courtesy of MICHELIN et Cie

DETAILED MAP OF THE OLD TOWN IN LILONGWE



