

I am on my sixth week of living in Uganda, which is crazy. My time here has been filled with so many highs and lows. I have spent moments counting down the seconds until I leave, and other moments feeling extremely sad at the thought of having to go. There have been many challenges that I have experienced here, but I feel that each and every one of them has helped me to grow in some way, whether that is learning to detach myself from a constant need to be productive or experiencing what it is like to be the minority in a space. When coming to a country that is so different from the United States, like Uganda, there are so many culture shocks. I have had moments where I have felt confused, angry, out of place, appreciative, and so much more. Knowing what I know now, here are some tips that I have for anyone considering interning in Kabale.

Tip 1: Be prepared to have A LOT of free time.

When I came into this internship I was expecting to be busy. In my head I figured we would be doing around five hours of activities per day, but this has not been true at all. The first two weeks I was here we had a ton of activities scheduled and we were often out in the field, but this completely dropped off after the second week ended. For weeks three to five I had pretty much no planned activities, so I spent most of my time at the clinic. However, I have come to realize that the clinic is honestly kind of boring, and just isn't my favorite place to be. There aren't a ton of patients, so most of my time there is spent sitting down reading a book. During those three weeks when there wasn't a lot going on I was really struggling. I was frustrated that my expectations for this experience weren't being met, and I was honestly having a hard time justifying whether it was worth \$10,000 in tuition to basically sit and do nothing related to the internship. Luckily Dr. Anguyo has provided me with a bit more structure for weeks six and seven, but even then most of the activities do not take longer than three hours, including the driving time. However, I do think that this experience has been a very restful break that I needed. I am someone who is go go go at school, so the relaxed nature of this program has given me time to finally breathe and just sit. I think it also goes to show how Ugandans do not prioritize packed schedules, whereas in the US many of us live life with every minute of our day busy and scheduled out.

Tip 2: Timeliness does not exist here

Before coming here I had heard of island time and had experienced it on trips I have been on, but Africa time is on a whole other level. Within days of being here I quickly figured out that no one

here has a timely bone in their body. One day we were told we would leave the house at 10am for the mobile clinic, but we didn't even leave until 11:30am. Even church starts late! Americans prioritize being on time and following a schedule, but those same values are not held here. It can definitely be frustrating, but I recommend just trying to go with the flow.

Tip 3: Come to terms with eating the same things over and over, and eating very little meat.

I love to try the traditional foods of the places that I visit, and I was very excited to try the Ugandan food before I got here. There are many great dishes here that I enjoy such as chapati and mandazi and peanut peas, but the food can definitely get repetitive. In the US we are so used to eating many varieties of meals like Mexican, Asian, American, etc. but Ugandans eat pretty much only Ugandan food day in and day out. Most of my meals consist of a lot of carbs, such as rice, bananas, potatoes, and other cereal grains. We almost never have meat more than once per day, so most of the protein comes from beans. Sometimes it is hard when I am having a day where I am homesick or just upset and I would love to have one of my comfort foods from home, but I have to eat the same thing I have been eating for the last six weeks. I would definitely recommend asking to help cook the meals sometimes because I have been able to teach my chef, Doreen, how to make grilled cheese with tomato soup and quesadillas. The food can be a bit repetitive because all of the ingredients are locally grown and harvested, but the plus side of this is that it all tastes so fresh and delicious. In the US we may get to have a variety of foods because we import everything, but it definitely doesn't have the same quality.

Tip 4: Accept that you will never be invisible when you go outside.

The term for foreigners here is "muzungu" and it is a word that I have become extremely accustomed to hearing. When you walk outside it is common to hear people shouting muzungu and asking "how are you?". When I first got here I thought it was pretty funny, but as time has gone on and I have honestly gotten really sick of it. It can be exhausting to feel so visible and receive so much unwanted attention. Not being able to blend in and sticking out like a sore thumb is honestly really inconvenient, especially when I am tired and don't have the energy to talk to others. I have had some uncomfortable interactions, all with men. A few have come up and touched me, and some of them will come up to you drunk blabbering about all sorts of things. I try to not let the attention bother me too much because when people call you a muzungu or stare they are not ill intended, many of them are just really excited. However, I think it is important to allow yourself to feel frustrated and annoyed occasionally. After all, the US really

values personal space and basically minding your own business, but that is not the case here. Something I have discovered recently is that if you throw a scowl on your face or just move with a lot of confidence you tend to get less interactions, so if you ever feel like you really can't be bothered just look angry.

#### Tip 5: Take in the differences in values around productivity

The US values productivity and efficiency so much that has become engrained in me to value those same things. If I go through a day and feel that I haven't accomplished something, or feel that I wasn't busy enough I feel bad about myself. However, this is really challenging here.

There are some days when I honestly feel like I don't accomplish anything. Sometimes there aren't activities planned, or no one comes into the clinic, or there isn't much to do around town. These days always feel like they are dragging on forever, and I go to bed upset because I feel that my day was not productive enough. Some things that I do to try and combat this is spend time reading or working out on the balcony or walking to a local cafe to do some work on my computer. It can definitely still be frustrating when I am used to going from classes to work to doing homework and hanging out with friends, but I try to feel productive here by at least not sitting on my phone all day. Another good thing to feel "productive" about is immersing yourself in the culture, so asking the people around the house to play a game of soccer or learning to cook the local dishes. Overall, I think it is important to take this opportunity to realize that your self worth and value does not equate to how much you get done in a day or how quickly you do it. It can be good to live life at a slower pace and just take in everything around you, without flying through life so quickly that it passes you by.