

Malawi 2019

Before this trip I had never heard of the country Malawi, but some quick research revealed to me a country of amazing culture, but one struggling with poverty. Hearing about this inspired me to sign up and after a year of fundraising and countless training weekends the time had finally come. So on the 28th of July we departed from Heathrow and after an 8 hour flight to Ethiopia and then a 5 hour flight we arrived in Malawi.

The journey from the airport was my first experience of Africa, everywhere I looked there were people bustling going about their daily lives. All the children looked so happy and would always get excited and run after the mini-bus. Despite the bumpy ride down dirt roads, we arrived in good spirits, and then we remembered we were camping. The place we were staying was called Nitchisi

which is a small region in central Malawi.



On our first morning, our guide took us on a hike through the countryside to go see a waterfall. Along the way we saw locals farming and our guide showed us where hyenas had been spotted.



(The scenery on our walk)

The next day our guide took us to the local village, just a few minutes' walk from where we had been camping. When we arrived we were stared at by the locals. But despite their stares they were all really nice and were happy to show us how they made their houses and how they lived, as well as this all the children from the village came out to see us. One of our leaders had the idea to bring bubbles to show to the kids, as such luxuries would have never been seen before, and eventually

despite some hesitation they found the bubbles really fun to play with. After this we were taken to a small rainforest which is the only one for hundreds of miles.

That afternoon all the local village folk came to where we were camped and showed us some cultural dances. The dances were interesting to say the least but it was nice to hear the village women sing.



(Example of the kind of rural roads)

From Nitchisi we took a 10 hour bus ride to Kavusi which was our base of operation from which we could begin our work, and the next day after flag break we hiked to the school to see what needed doing. For some of the Explorers it was their second trip to the school and seeing their pride over their previous work really inspired me to work hard and feel the same pride in the work that I would do. So after a brief presentation by the head teachers and the village officials we got to planning and tidying the buildings so that we could work. Me and a few others began work tidying the library along with a few Malawian scouts, whose names were Praise and Alice. Both Praise and Alice told us about Malawi and the education system, from them we learnt that only by achieving highly in school could you escape poverty. This really highlighted the importance of making the school the best possible learning environment.



(View from the secondary school)

The next few days gave us a taste of the kind of work we would be undertaking over the next few weeks. The work consisted of building a store for food, building more bunkbeds for the girls' dormitory, building lockers for the dormitory, building desks for the classrooms and general upkeep of the school buildings.

From the very beginning of our trip we were put into "families", these families were small groups of four in which we would review our days' work. But every 5 days at Kavusi it was the responsibility of each family to go into the market and buy ingredients for a meal that they had planned. That group would then have the full day to make breakfast, lunch and dinner all on two open fires. Despite the stress of cooking for 70 people 'cook crews' were my favourite days as it meant that we could truly experience the culture of Malawi. The market where we brought food was located in the bustling city of Mzuzu, everything was sold there from live chickens to mobile phones. The market allowed us to test out our haggling skills which was

always fun as well as offering the opportunity to talk to the locals whom were all really friendly.

(View of the entrance to the market)





Throughout the project work I got to work on a whole range of different projects from making and varnishing bunk beds, to hanging curtains. (The picture is the finished room)



(Finished lockers, made from scratch)

One project I particularly found rewarding was bricklaying for the store. As you could clearly see the progress from empty space to a whole building, also from this I learnt how to brick lay from a Malawian scout called Bilton whom I became good friends with.



(Bilton and I with Miracle)

Bilton was an up and coming artist from Mzuzu but the lack of business and meant that he did building on the side to pay rent. Bilton told me that in the whole of Malawi there were no art schools so to pursue his dream was very hard for him. Bilton ran a small tailors with his friends, in which he made and customized clothes so when he heard that I liked his clothes he offered to make me some.

Half way through the project work, one of the leaders, Jackie heard about a primary school a few minutes down the road which needed help. I was on cook crew on the day of assessing the primary school, and the classrooms I saw were completely run down. Dust had blown in staining the walls and half of the classrooms had holes in the floor from where the concrete had been cracked. Seeing this inspired me to work harder, so for the next three days I worked at the primary school scrubbing the walls, painting and filling holes. All this hard work by the whole team on both schools lead to us finishing on time.

(Painted classroom, complete with desks and new school logo drawn by Daniel, a Malawian scout & what one of the rooms looked like before)



For me this trip has been an experience of a lifetime, and one that I will remember forever. I know that I have helped improve the learning environment of others. The experiences I have had have really opened my eyes, and the amazing people I have met have really taught me a lot about perseverance and the importance of the believing in your own ability. One thing that stuck out to me during my time was the happiness that radiated of everyone we met. Despite their situation everyone was always kind and happy to meet us wherever we went.



(finished primary school library)



(Bilton, Praise and I at the celebration evening)

In the final part of the trip we went swimming in Lake Malawi before driving 8 hours down to the national park of Malawi. When we arrived we found out that we were camping within direct access of the animals, this was clear when our dinner, was interrupted by the news that a few elephant where just 10 metres away from where we were sitting. The next morning we awoke early and went on safari, seeing the animals first hand was truly breath-taking and the experience was one like no other.

(Pictures I took whilst on safari)



