

AfCiC Christmas Trip 2010



The AfCiC Christmas trip to the coast was the highlight of the December holidays. The excitement leading up to the trip reflected on the faces of the children and the staff alike. While only a long bus ride away, the ocean and the beach had previously been just a dream for many street children many of whom have not been beyond Thika district. Weeks before the trip Anne Wanjiru said, *"I am very happy for the trip to Mombasa place where I have never been there even once. It will be my first time to see ocean and beaches. I am really grateful about that."*

All the children speculated over who would be able to attend, Eleanor surprised us all by fitting over 43 kids on the list. As the day of departure neared, more and more boys came to the ICC after visiting their families during their school breaks. The night before, the ICC was packed with excited children sharing beds and camping on the floor. Needless to say, little sleep was had.

Eleanor, Kathryn, Edward, and Jane successfully piled all the children onto the Chania Special bus with help from Joseph Musomi, Anne, and Grace who were invited along to assist with the cooking and crowd control. Once again, the chance of sleep on that bus was low. The drive was entertaining yet slow due to over a dozen bathroom breaks. At 6 am the following morning, the bus pulled up to the sandy beach and children ran out to check out the ocean (waking up the other campers in the process). The beach was incredible – white sands, palm trees, and clear blue water.

Before basking in the sun, everyone pitched in to set up the 15 tents under the tree line and Jane's portable kitchen. Jane and the girls began cooking an enormous lunch of chapatti and ndengu while several over-excited boys ran out to the ocean.



A few minutes later, they returned crying with sea urchins poking into their feet. All the days spent roaming around town barefoot paid off because I would have been much more sensitive to the painful spikes. Moses Karanja claimed, *"I have 15 sea urchins in my feet! The sea urchins bite us and it hurts but not anymore."* One of

the beach boys came to their rescue with the cure of rubbing pawpaw (papaya) juice over their feet. In no time, they were back in the action.



Fortunately the first 50 yards of the ocean are shallow so everyone could go swim at will without any risk of drowning. Several had not learned to swim but that did not seem to stop them. We spent most of the day splashing in the water, doing handstand contests, and swimming races. The water felt perfect!



As the low tide came, everyone flocked to the beach to pass around the football or make sand castles. A man with a camel was walking up and down the beach and offered camel rides to all the boys, which was a sight to see. A camel is not a particularly smooth means of transportation and the younger boys looked terrified riding 10 feet in the air.



After exhausting the camel, the sun began to set and everyone showered to prepare for dinner. The running water shower was a novelty for all the boys, who were used to the bucket showers in the ICC.



Jane cooked up a great dinner of ugali and ndengu, which was quickly devoured by all the hungry children. After dinner, Eddie, the beach boy, collected fire wood and set up a campfire on the beach. Everyone circled around under the stars and sang songs and told stories. The exhaustion for the previous night's lack of sleep set in and the boys soon wandered off to their sleeping bags.

The next morning began with another early start at 6 am. Once the sun rises, the heat does too and it becomes impossible to stay in the hot and sticky tents. We enjoyed breakfast and chai and hopped back into the ocean. The boys could not get enough of the ocean. Water wrestling and water football became the popular sports of the day. After several hours of playing, it was already time for lunch. Chapatis, everyone's favourite!

In the afternoon, Eddie agreed to take everyone on a village walk to see where he grew up and learn about the Swahili culture. With 43 children trailing behind him, Eddie led us on a dusty walk through fruit and cashew trees. We showed up at Eddie's parents' home and greeted the family. The boys were immediately distracted by the numerous tall coconut trees. Jack Ndambuke led the way, climbing all the way to the top of a tree and grabbing a coconut. This was slightly terrifying for the staff since the trees rise to over 30 feet! Edward allowed the other boys to have a try up a small portion of the trees. Everyone enjoyed cracking open the coconuts, drinking the milk, and eating the remains. Nicholas Gicharu wrote a letter to his sponsor saying, "The coconut's was my favourite thing. We ate coconuts and broke them on stones." A very neat experience!



We returned to our campsite on Tiwi and jumped back into the ocean to cool off and enjoy the last bit of sunlight. The boys ate their last dinner of ndengu and ugali and gathered to sit around the campfire. Emma Smith and her husband, Lucien, surprised everyone with marshmallows and Eleanor brought out glow sticks. This was very exciting until a few started chewing on the sticks and spraying the chemicals everywhere. Once again, the boys realized how exhausted they actually were and went to bed early.

Sadly, the next morning, the bus arrived to begin the journey home. The trip lived up to all the expectations and the memories would last forever. An opportunity to visit the coast rarely comes along so everyone was anxious to run home and tell their families about the fun they had.

The Staff Arrive...

As the children travelled back to Thika, many of the staff and their families prepared for the bus journey. The following morning, the Chania Special pulled back up to the sands of Tiwi Beach and the AfCiC staff hurried out, eager to get fresh air and relax by the beach. Fortunately, since the tents were already set up, they could head straight to the ocean. Several took walks along the shore, many took a quick nap in their tent to recover from the drive, and the teenagers played a game of football on the sand. Peris said, "This is the most exciting trip ever. Everything about the beach is amazing – the water, the sand, the sun. And just taking time off work to be with colleagues."

During the low tide, a bunch of us walked out to the tide while carefully avoiding the visible sea urchins. We admired the hundreds of starfish that lay out in the far waters. Margaret Juma collected shells to make into necklaces when she returned home.



Raphael, Stanley, and John Peter joined the staff trip as a reward for the hard work during holiday club. They enjoyed getting to know Daina's son, Kevin, and Margaret Muriuki's twin daughters. They loved the beach and appreciated getting the opportunity.





Since Joseph could not attend because he and his wife have a new baby named Dan at home, Charles kindly offered to bring his children , Frank and Derrick, along with him. Charles and his wife, Anne, treated Frank and Derrick like they were family and cared for them throughout the trip. They have not stopped talking about the once in a lifetime trip since!! Janet's children Geoffrey & Lucy, Evans children Ellis & Bill Gates and many others were all the same. They all talked about how they look forward to the AfCiC trip each year and what a different it makes to them.



Frank thoroughly enjoyed himself!

Fortunately for Jane, her two friends, Monica and Florence, who cook at Garissa Road Primary School, took over the cooking duties and provided excellent meals for the staff. They also received help from a local man who taught them how to make Swahili pilau rice with meat. Everyone loved trying the coastal dish with a touch of coconut flavouring.

At night, we set up another campfire for the staff and had lots of fun singing and dancing! Daina and Njenga entertained us all for hours around the fire. A few other campers joined in after seeing how much fun was had. Eleanor brought out more glow sticks, which the staff loved just as much as the kids.

The following day, a group of the girls decided to go into Mombasa to tour Fort Jesus and Old Town while the rest decided to stay and relax on the beach.



After a full two days enjoying the beach and coastal weather, the staff hopped back on the bus to return to Thika and celebrate Christmas with their extended families. Everyone made it home safely!

Throughout the following few weeks, conversations mostly revolved around Mombasa amongst the children in the ICC and all the staff. It was an absolutely incredible trip which everyone will treasure forever. Everyone sends their best regards and many thanks of appreciation!

