

Feaza Jivanjee-Tayebjee, married with two children.
Nairobi, Kenya (2015-present)

My name is Faeza Jivanjee-Tayebjee. I was born in Nairobi but lived most of my life in the United States. I have called Nairobi my home for the last seven years. I currently teach for Durham Kenya, an international school affiliated with Durham Boarding School in Durham, UK. I am married with two kids. Currently, my kids are in college in the United States, but both attended secondary school here in Nairobi, in which they obtained their O-level certificate and then attained an IB diploma.

Visas and Language

Your school should have someone to assist you in the work permit and visa process. The work permit here is very expensive and would not be something a teacher could afford on their salary. Therefore, make sure your school will be paying for most of your work permit or be prepared to factor in the cost. Also, ask for help on your TSC number or equivalent since it is usually faster through the school's contacts.

Most Kenyans speak English. However, the national language is Kiswahili. Kiswahili is taught in most international schools. Besides from Kiswahili most Kenyans speak their tribal language. And most Kenyan South Asians speak Gujrati, Hindi, or Urdu.

Weather

One of the best things about living in Kenya is the weather. A typical day in Nairobi is sunny and 20-23 degrees Celsius (70-80 degrees Fahrenheit). We have no heating or cooling in our homes because we don't need it. Our summer, December through February, is warm but never reaches above 40 degrees Celsius (90 degrees Fahrenheit). Our winter, in which you will probably be in your home country, is 18 degrees Celsius (60 degrees Fahrenheit). We do sometimes experience periods of rain, which do not last long but can cause traffic difficulties and flooding.

Accommodation

Most international schools here will assist you in finding suitable housing. Housing in Nairobi is quite expensive. You should plan on spending no more than 30% of your monthly income on housing. Most international teachers rent. When looking for housing it is common to look for an already furnished place. A clothes washer is standard here, but dryers and dishwashers are not. Water and electricity are added to your rent and depending on the type of accommodation you get; you may also have a service charge that pays for the common area to be maintained and common services like security guards. Most residences in Nairobi have security guards who man the perimeter and the main gate.

Additional Help

It is not uncommon to have additional help in Kenya. A maid, nanny, or driver is affordable. Most families have a maid to clean, a nanny to help with children, and a driver or cook to help with those duties. The extra time allows you, as a teacher, to maintain the schedule required of an international teacher in Kenya.

Work-life

Most international schools in Nairobi are quite demanding to work for. Most teachers work from 7 am to 4 pm. Often two nights a week teachers may also be expected to work from 6:30-8:00 pm, due to extracurricular events or parent-teacher conferences. Most international schools do not give a lunch break and expect you to eat with the students. Lunch is subsidized and usually health-conscious. Tea and morning breaks are given by most schools.

However, your colleagues are nice, and the parents of your students are supportive. Most international schools will not allow you to tutor students within your school. However, some schools may understand that you might want to take additional tutoring jobs for the extra pocket money. Tutoring can pay quite well in Nairobi. So, clarify your school's policy if tutoring is something you are interested in.

Food, Travel, and Entertainment

Nairobi is a bustling city with a variety of restaurants, clubs, and bars. Kenya's staple food is traditional ugali (corn-based starch) and Sukuma wiki (kale). However, you can find a variety of different cuisines here, (Thai, Indian, Japanese, Mexican, Italian, etc.) The grocery stores in Nairobi are stocked with most foods and supplies. Alcohol is available in most supermarkets.

One of the main advantages of living in Nairobi is the travel. Nairobi has a National Park within the city where one can view many varieties of animals (lions, giraffes, zebras, and rhinos). In the school holidays, you can take advantage of many opportunities to travel to this part of the world. South Africa, Tanzania (Mt Kilimanjaro), as well as the Kenyan coast are just a few destinations that people here choose. The Kenya coast is about an hour's flight away and has some of the best beaches and snorkeling.

Also, many ex-pats here take advantage of the nice weather and participate in a range of outdoor activities. Running, biking and mountain climbing are quite popular here, all of which have clubs you can join. There are adult football and cricket leagues. The Arts scene is quite vibrant. The national theater has a variety of plays and art shows, and galleries are popular in more affluent areas. Each mall has an Imax movie theater. In terms of at-home entertainment, Netflix and Spotify have affordable subscriptions here.

Medical

Medical services in Nairobi are quite good. The main hospitals are Aga Khan, MP Shah, and Nairobi Hospital. It is not uncommon to be given only in-patient cover as part of your health care package. Outpatient is usually not a part of the normal cover. A doctor's consultation will vary here, so best to ask when making the appointment. Most international schools have a nurse on staff. Most pharmacists can help you with medication.

Flights Home

Certain international schools offer an additional benefit of flights home to your country of origin for you and your immediate family. This is so you can go home for the summer holidays. It is an added benefit to ask for.

Transport

Uber and local taxis are readily available and are an economical way of getting around without the expense of a car. Driving here is for the brave-hearted but with practice, one can get used to it. Most international schools are in the suburbs which are quieter and easier to drive to. The school may require you to obtain your driver's license. Nairobi has several driving schools that can help you through the process.

Education Standards

Education standards in the top schools in Kenya are quite good. The IB schools are getting students into the top universities in America and the UK. The local Kenyan schools are not an option for most ex-pats due to the lack of facilities and extracurriculars. However, tuition at private schools is quite high. If you have children, a fee waiver or fee reeducation for them to attend your school is not unheard of.

All in all

Nairobi offers a great lifestyle and is very relaxed if you have the means, which seems counterintuitive since most people see Africa as being affordable. Therefore, it is important to discuss compensation, housing, and transport allowances. Nairobi's weather makes outdoor living easy, especially in Covid times. Also, the additional help allows you the time to spend with family once you are off. The tutoring culture also allows you additional income if you choose. This is a great place for young families that love the outdoors or for people who love to nature travel.