

OTN 2025

**Oxford Tropical
Network Meeting**

Mombasa, Kenya



KEMRI–WELLCOME TRUST RESEARCH PROGRAMME

**Conducting high quality,
purposeful, and relevant
research in human health,
building sustainable research
capacity and leadership**

**OTN Attendee
Information Pack**

Welcome to the Oxford Tropical Network Meeting

Dear Delegate,

Welcome to Mombasa! Karibu Mombasa!

We are excited to host you for the Oxford Tropical Network (OTN) Meeting 2025. To enable your comfort in Mombasa, the team is happy to share the below information:

Meeting venue



Your accommodation has been booked on bed and breakfast at the Sarova Whitesands Beach Hotel. The meeting will be happening in the Hotel conference room which is equipped with high-speed Wi-Fi. Lunch and coffee/tea will be provided for registered participants at the meeting venue.

Check-in time: 14:00 pm

Check-out time: 12:00 pm

Sarova Whitesands Beach Hotel

Off Malindi Road,

Mombasa County

+254 719 022 000 | +254 709 111 000

Mombasa city,

Web: <https://www.sarovahotels.com/whitesands-mombasa/>



Travel & logistics

Arrival and pick up

On arrival at the Moi International Airport (Mombasa), please look out for a placard with the KEMRI-Wellcome and OTN logo after the baggage claim. The assigned drivers will have your travel itinerary and will come to pick you up at the right time.

Getting Around Mombasa

When the heat becomes overwhelming or walking is no longer practical, there are several convenient transport options available in Mombasa:

- **Taxis:** Readily available and relatively affordable, especially from the airport. Uber also operates within Mombasa city.
- **Motorbike Taxis (Boda Bodas):** While common and popular, we advise participants not to use motorbike taxis due to safety concerns.
- **Public Buses and Minivans (Matatus):** These operate along most major routes. They are very inexpensive but can become overcrowded during peak hours.

Meals

You are entitled to your meals inclusive of a soft drink. This should be signed off to one's room and KEMRI-Wellcome Trust Research Programme will cater for this. All other extras such as alcoholic drinks and tips will be borne by the participant. Group meals are as indicated on the agenda.



Visa

Some nationalities may enter Kenya without a visa under the Visa Exemption Program. Holders of valid ordinary passports from these countries may stay in Kenya for up to 90 days for tourism, except South African and Malaysian nationals, who are limited to 30 days. A full list of visa-exempt and visa-on-arrival countries is available through the Directorate of Immigration Services under the Ministry of Interior and National Administration. All travelers must apply for an Electronic Travel Authorization (eTA) at www.etakenya.go.ke. Processing takes approximately two working days; apply at least two weeks before travel.



Insurance and Health Advice

All participants are required to have comprehensive travel and health insurance before traveling to Kenya. This should include medical coverage, emergency medical evacuation to your home country, and protection against unexpected losses or expenses such as trip cancellations, lost passports, or stolen belongings. Please note that any medical consultations, hospital visits, or related healthcare expenses will be the responsibility of the participant. If medical referral or assistance is needed during your stay, our team can help connect you with appropriate healthcare providers.



Registration

Registration for the meeting will commence at 12:00 pm on 15th September 2025 at the registration desk next to the conference room. There will be clear signage to the conference room. For those who arrive early and are not attending the pre-meeting workshops, you are still encouraged to complete the registration process on 15th September 2025 so we can reduce the queue size on the morning of the first day of the meeting.



Currency Exchange

The local currency is the Kenyan shilling (KES/KSh). The exchange rate from USD to KES/KSh is approximately USD1 = KES130. The rate is subject to currency fluctuations. You are advised to convert your money to KES/KSh on arrival at the airport, in banks, shops, and malls, or at hotels. The hotels and many other establishments also accept major credit cards (Visa or MasterCard predominantly). A passport will be required for all foreign exchange transactions. An online currency converter is available at <https://www.oanda.com/currency-converter>



Contact information

Your contact while in Kenya will be Elizabeth Mwatata on emwatata@kemri-wellcome.org and +254 723 615 592



Time Zone

Kenya operates on Eastern Africa Time (EAT), which is GMT/UTC+3. The country does not observe daylight saving time, so the time remains consistent throughout the year. If you find it hard to keep track of the time difference, don't worry, your phone's clock app can usually adjust automatically. Alternatively, you can check the current time in Kenya anytime using this reliable online clock: <https://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/kenya>.



Electrical outlets

The power plugs and sockets are of type G, 13amp 3-prong/pin. The standard voltage in Kenya is 240V, frequency 50Hz. You can use your electrical appliances in Kenya if the standard voltage in your country is between 220 – 240V (as is in the UK, Europe, Australia and most of Asia and Africa). If an adaptor is called for, consider bringing one with you, although they can be purchased locally. Kenya experiences power blackouts. Therefore, it is important to pack a power bank and a flashlight (or use the one on your phone).



Weather

Mombasa has a hot, humid tropical climate, with daytime temperatures consistently ranging between 30°C and 32°C (86°F to 90°F) year-round. The city experiences high humidity levels, especially along the coast. The heaviest rainfall occurs during the long rains in April and May, while January and February are typically the driest months. Despite seasonal variations in precipitation, Mombasa remains warm and sunny for most of the year.



Communications

Kenya's country code is +254. To call internationally from Kenya, dial + or 00, then the country code, area code (if needed), and the number. Safaricom and other networks offer international bundles via USSD codes like *444# or *100#. SIM cards with data are sold at airports and major stores; a passport is required for registration. In emergencies, dial Police: 112, 999 or 911; Fire: 112, 999 or 9111; Ambulance: 999; Tourist Police: 126.



Health, Special Needs, and Safety

Your health, safety, and individual needs are important to us. If you have any medical conditions, accessibility requirements, or concerns related to your well-being, please reach out to the designated contact person at the KEMRI-Wellcome Trust Research Programme. We are committed to ensuring that your visit and participation in the meeting are comfortable and seamless.



Cultural Etiquette in Kenya

Kenyans are widely known for their warm, friendly nature, and it's common to see smiles exchanged during conversations. A handshake is the customary form of greeting when meeting someone or starting a discussion, regardless of age or gender. However, in some communities, cultural norms may apply, such as among certain tribes where teenage girls do not shake hands with older men.

Respectful greetings are highly valued. Common Swahili greetings include "**Jambo**" (Hello), "**Habari**" (How are you?), and "**Shikamoo**"—a traditional greeting used to show respect to elders.

When in doubt, don't hesitate to ask. Your hotel staff or local guide will be happy to assist and clarify anything you're unsure about. It's always better to seek guidance than to risk misunderstanding local customs.

Kenya is home to over 40 ethnic groups, each with its own traditions, especially surrounding rites of passage such as circumcision, weddings, and funerals. These customs are deeply rooted and may vary significantly from one region to another.

Important Tip: We kindly advise guests not to give money to children or people begging on the streets. While well-intentioned, this can encourage dependency and exploitation. Instead, consider supporting a local charity or community initiative.



Language

All the Kenyan communities have their own language, while Kiswahili is the national language. English and Kiswahili are the official languages. English is spoken by most of the population as a third language. However, Kiswahili is most preferred language in Mombasa city. Adjusting your speech, such as leaving out slang and idioms, is advisable to ease communication in English. Learning a little Kiswahili before your trip will ease the interaction with the local communities you will be building.



Food

Major cities like Nairobi and Mombasa have excellent restaurants that meet Western standards. In the cities, one can choose African, Indian, British, French, Italian, Lebanese, and many other cuisines. Most restaurants also serve vegetarian meals, but often, Indian restaurants offer the most choices. It is important to specify any dietary restrictions when making a food order.

Kenyans have their indigenous foods, some unique to specific communities. Examples include:

- Ugali: Made of maize flour and water. It takes the form of a cake or dumpling.
- Githeri: This is a mixture of maize and beans.
- Mursik: Fermented milk, popular among the Kalenjin community.
- Pilau: Spicy rice, often cooked together with beef or goat meat. It is a popular meal in the coastal region.
- Kachumbari is a mixture of chopped tomatoes, onions, pepper, parsley, and, in some cases, avocado. It is mostly served with nyama choma.
- Nyama choma – This is roasted meat, often goat or beef.



Religion

Kenya is home to over 4,000 registered religious organizations, a testament to the country's constitutional guarantee of freedom of worship. Christianity is the predominant faith nationally, embraced by the majority of the population. However, in Mombasa City, Islam holds a significant presence and is the dominant religion. This diversity in religious expression highlights Kenya's rich cultural and spiritual landscape, where various beliefs coexist and are legally protected, fostering an environment of religious tolerance and pluralism.



Your departure

Please arrive at the airport at least three hours before your flight departure time. To ensure a smooth transfer, be in the hotel lobby on time for your scheduled transport to the airport. A detailed departure schedule will be shared with you in advance. Timely arrival at the lobby will help avoid delays and ensure you have ample time for check-in, security screening, and boarding. Your cooperation is appreciated to ensure a seamless departure experience.



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