

Report of visit to Kenya

Jambo, which is welcome in Swahili is something you'll hear often if you visit Kenya; particularly if you're fortunate enough to meet Shuaib Adam, 1st Vice President/ Chairman, International Police Association, Kenya Section and my new friend in Nairobi.

When I first learned that I was headed to Nairobi for work, I was both elated and scared. In spite of my travelling experience, the thought of going to Africa alone was daunting, particularly after reading some of the travel guide warnings. To help me, my father, Paul Schmitt, an IPA member from Region One, offered to reach out on my behalf.

Working through Harry Summerton, National Travel Secretary for IPA Canada, we quickly made contact with Shuaib in Nairobi.

I wondered at first how easy communications with Africa would be, but I needn't have worried. Shuaib is literally attached to his blackberry and I only ever had to wait a short time before I got the answers to my questions. And once in Nairobi, he provided me with a cell phone so that I could always reach him or call back home if I needed to. Talk about going above and beyond!

Although I had staff from the Canadian mission to help me during the day, it was through Shuaib's friendship and efforts after work that my trip to Nairobi became a dream come true. On my first night in Nairobi, Shuaib and I toured the city and had dinner at a local eatery where I had my first taste of barbequed goat. Let's just say that the company was great and the goat meat had an interesting flavour and texture and leave it at that!

During the day, I would regularly get a text asking if everything was OK or if I needed anything. In the nights that followed, Shuaib made me feel right at home as we dined together each night at a different place along with his beautiful wife and grandson. Even when I left Nairobi and was on safari, my African-Dad as Shuaib became known to me, would check in to ensure that I hadn't become an evening meal for a lion or two.

I can't say enough about the support and kindness shown to me by Shuaib and his family. And thanks to the IPA network, I wasn't a woman travelling alone. I had a friend I could count on for advice and company. Equally important, my family back in Canada knew I was safe and in good hands.

So much of travelling is not just about where you go, but who you meet. And I can happily report that IPA Nairobi represents some of the kindest and most welcoming people you could ever hope to meet. Jambo!

Kathy Bird
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Citizenship and Immigration Canada



Kathy making a new friend at the Giraffe Centre in Nairobi, Kenya



Who doesn't love a mud bath? David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust, Nairobi, Kenya