

# MPALA WELCOME PACKET



# KARIBUNI

SCIENCE • EDUCATION • CONSERVATION

# KARIBUNI MPALA



Karibuni (welcome) to Mpala Research Centre! This document is your guide for what to expect during your stay at Mpala, from food to facilities to campus contacts.

We hope you have an enjoyable, educational, and productive visit. We consider all our guests to be part of the Mpala family, and look forward to welcoming you back, time and again.

In the meantime, keep in touch! You can find us on Facebook as Mpala Research Centre, and on Twitter and Instagram as @MpalaLive. With questions related to science, curricula, or life at Mpala, contact our current Princeton in Africa Fellows ([education@mpala.org](mailto:education@mpala.org) or [science@mpala.org](mailto:science@mpala.org)), and for logistics and to plan your next visit, reach out to our Logistics Manager, Cosmas Nzomo ([stay@mpala.org](mailto:stay@mpala.org)). If you have any further questions, don't hesitate to reach out to our staff – a full list of contacts can be found at the end of this document.

Asanteni!





# INTRODUCTION: MPALA RESEARCH CENTRE

The Mpala property lies between the Ewaso Nyiro and the Ewaso Narok rivers in the heart of Laikipia County. Mpala's 48,000 acres of unfenced landscape stretch from the greener foothills of Mount Kenya in the south, towards more arid plains to the north. Spanning a range of habitats, the landscape is home to rare and majestic Grevy's Zebras, African Elephants, and many other savanna species, from the common to the critically endangered.

In 1969, George Small inherited Mpala Ranch from his brother Sam. George Small continued his brother's cattle ranching operations on the property, but made protecting Mpala's wildlife an integral part of ranch management. Humanitarian, philanthropist, and conservationist, George Small approached his alma mater, Princeton University, in 1989, and began the process of setting up a world-class environmental research station on the Mpala property.

The Mpala Research Trust was established in 1994 to run Mpala Research Centre (MRC) as a partnership between five organizations: Princeton University, the Smithsonian Institution, the National Museums of Kenya, the Kenya Wildlife Service, and the Mpala Wildlife Foundation. Through George's bequest to the Mpala Wildlife Foundation, and the generosity of our many donors, MRC provides opportunities for research and education in the environmental sciences by students and scientists from universities and conservation organizations in Kenya and abroad.

More than two decades since its inception, MRC has grown into a thriving international research facility, hosting hundreds of scientists, students, and conservationists each year. The research centre also supports various science based outreach programs, including the Northern Kenya Conservation Clubs, Laikipia Rabies Vaccination Campaign, and MpalaLive! online educational outreach platform. We are pleased to provide many opportunities for students and scientists to engage with and support these programs alongside their research and studies. In keeping with George Small's vision, the property still holds around 2,000 cattle, sheep, and camels for research purposes, and Mpala Research Centre remains committed to its mission of **science, education, and conservation.**



Check out our live cameras  
& learn about wildlife at  
[www.mpalalive.org](http://www.mpalalive.org)



# DAILY LIFE

*All the basics you need to get settled and oriented at the Research Centre*

## Food and Water

**Meals** are served buffet-style, and include both vegetarian and non-vegetarian options. Please notify Cosmas, the Logistics Manager, during booking if you have a special diet (vegan, gluten-free, etc.) or food allergies.

Breakfast: 7:00 a.m. – 8:00 a.m.

Morning tea: 10:00 a.m.

Lunch: 1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Dinner: 7:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

Meal times can be adjusted to suit student group schedules. If you will be delayed in the field, you can ask the kitchen staff to **reserve a meal**. **Early breakfast** (cereals) and **packed lunches** are also available on request. **Tea and coffee** are available in the dining room at all times.

**Filtered, purified drinking water** is available in the clear jugs and metal dispensers in the dining room. Drink plenty of water to stay hydrated!

Otherwise, however, please remember that **water is precious and limited** in this arid environment. Please limit your shower time and other water-consuming activities. We appreciate your help conserving this essential resource!

We use organic waste as **compost** in Mpala's vegetable garden. Please separate food from non-organic waste (napkins, wrappers, etc.) in your rooms and the dining area.



## Clothing

Mpala staff and visitors come from a variety of cultural backgrounds. Particularly in the village, town, and community areas, **culturally appropriate clothing** includes covered shoulders and trousers or skirts extending at least to the knee.

**In the field**, long trousers and sturdy, closed-toe shoes provide essential protection against biting insects, snakes, and thorny vegetation. A wide-brimmed hat and loose, long-sleeved shirt are also recommended for sun protection.

Although usually **warm by day**, Mpala is often **quite cool at night**. We recommend that visitors bring a cardigan/jumper and scarf or shawl to keep warm. Note that linens, towels, and mosquito netting are all provided with accommodation.

## Staying Connected

**Wi-Fi internet** is available in the labs, library, administrative office and dining area at the Main Centre, and within two of the Main Centre's private bungalows – the Smithsonian Institution House and Jenga House. No password is necessary to access the public “MRC” network. We request that internet users limit highbandwidth activities, such as video streaming and downloads, when possible. No internet connection, and only limited cell reception, is available at the River Camp.

Telcom (Orange) **cell network** is available at the Main Centre. Please note that Safaricom and Airtel coverage are extremely limited in Mpala's area.

**Power** (240v outlets) is supplied to the Main Centre on a 24-hour basis from an integrated solar power system and backup generator. Please help us **conserve energy** by switching off appliances and lights when not in use. Note that the Princeton and Keller dorm buildings do not have power outlets for personal devices; however, charge ports are available the library, classroom, labs, and dining room. At the River Camp, charge ports are available in the main dining area.



## Additional Amenities

**Laundry** is collected each morning from the bags or baskets provided in each room. Clothes are hand-washed, sun-dried, and returned to the laundry room adjacent to the kitchen. Turnover time is usually less than two days. By Kenyan custom, socks and inner clothes are washed by their owners. Buckets, laundry lines, and pegs are available around the dorms and bandas for this purpose.

The **Levinson Gym** at the Main Centre is open for use at all hours, and is equipped with an assortment of equipment, including machines, free weights, and yoga mats. Generously donated by Dr. Frank Levinson, the open-air, solar-powered building is also an exemplar of green design, with facilities including a low-flow toilet and shower equipped with solar hot water. Please use the gym with care: do not remove any items, wipe down machines after use with the towels provided, and be sure to turn off the lights and fully close and latch the door when leaving.

## Coming & Going

**Transport services** can be arranged upon request with one of several taxi drivers/companies affiliated with Mpala.

**Upon arrival**, all guests are required to sign an **indemnity** (waiver) form. Mpala does not accept any responsibility or liability for any loss, injury or other damage during activities while at Mpala Research Centre.

We would also request that you label and make an inventory of all your **equipment** and have a copy with you and the office. This way we know the equipment you have and are able to help you trace it in the event of loss.

Please also note that **Mpala's community** includes people from many different cultural backgrounds and ages. We request that our visitors be **tolerant** and **thoughtful** of others at all times.

**As you leave**, we ask that you refrain from leaving cash tips with any individual staff members, because our departments work as teams. However, if you would like to leave a token of appreciation for any department or for Mpala as a whole, this is always appreciated. You can do so through our main office either by cash or invoice.

As you leave, we ask that you notify the management if you wish to leave any equipment behind, and we will arrange for adequate storage. If you wish to gift any staff member any equipment, please notify the office.

**Mpala t-shirts** are available by donation of at least Ksh. 800; you may pay by cash or on your invoice at the main office. If you are interested, please inquire with Fardosa, Cosmas, or the Princeton in Africa Fellows.

We also sell **handmade beadwork** produced by Alakara, a women's group in the Mpala community village, and bangles (**snake bracelets and rings**) handmade by Akoit, a security staff member and self-taught blacksmith. To purchase beadwork or bangles, please reach out to the Princeton in Africa Fellow, or inquire with the kitchen staff (most are members of Alakara). Beadwork and bangle purchases are cash only.

Lastly, remember to **keep in touch!** We are **@Mpala Research Centre** on Facebook, and **@MpalaLive** on Twitter and Instagram. Tag us, tweet at us, and use **#mpalaresearchcentre** to connect your science, education, and conservation related posts to our growing network!

You can sign up on our website ([www.mpala.org](http://www.mpala.org)) to receive Mpala's **e-newsletter**, the Mpala Memos, which includes latest updates on research, events, fellowships, and other opportunities.

Follow us on Social Media!  
FB: **@MpalaResearch Centre**  
Twitter and Instagram: **@MpalaLive!**

Post about your time at Mpala, tag us & use the hashtag: **#mpalaresearchcentre**



# HEALTH, SAFETY & SECURITY

*Here are some guidelines for staying well during your time at Mpala.*

## Staying Healthy

We are living out **in the bush**, and share the Mpala campus with many wonderful creatures. There are some snakes, scorpions and spiders around – to avoid bites, don't walk around barefoot, and check your shoes and clothing before putting them on.

**The ring road** that circles campus is a great place for walking or jogging. However, please alert the security staff in the control room before you go out, and never walk or jog on the ring road after dark.

**After dark**, always carry a flashlight and minimize movement in remote parts of the campus. If you would like to be accompanied to your room after dark, security staff members are always available in the Control Office or near the dining area.

Mpala's climate is generally warm and dry. **Stay hydrated** with plenty of water and electrolytes, and avoid drinking unfiltered water.

**In the field**, students and new researchers should always be accompanied by a **research assistant or security staff member**. These staff members are well versed with the area, wildlife, terrain, and local communities.

## Getting Treatment

Remember you are living in a remote research station, and it is better to **treat injuries and illnesses sooner, rather than later**. Please let us know if you are injured or ill so we can ensure you receive treatment as soon as possible.

There is a basic **first aid** box in the Administration Office and the Control Room for small injuries, and many of our staff are certified in occupational first aid and fire safety. We also have a **mobile clinic** at the Ranch House that provides some medication and basic treatment 24 hours a day. To access the clinic, please call the Security Control Room if you are at the Main Centre (0772 481 213), or contact the Camp Supervisor if you are at the River Camp.

All researchers are required to have Flying Doctor's **medical evacuation** membership before arrival, or proof of another international medical evacuation plan. If you are not already enrolled, please contact Cosmas Nzomo ([stay@mpala.org](mailto:stay@mpala.org)) and he can facilitate Flying Doctor's membership for you.



# FACILITIES & RESEARCH

*Mpala Research Centre has housing for over 90 students and researchers. It is divided into three operational units: The Main Centre, the Ewaso Nyiro River Camp, and the Ranch House.*



## The Main Centre

The Main Research Centre's facilities include a communal dining hall and outdoor eating areas.

The Main Centre holds two communal **laboratories**: McCormack Lab and NSF Lab, which include communal equipment and freezer and fridge space, and receive clean water and electricity (both 110v and 240v) on a 24-hour basis. The labs include basic equipment for DNA analysis, microscopic examination, and analytical chemistry. The Mpala administration can also issue private **research offices** and lab benches for researchers upon request.

Additionally, the Main Centre holds a **greenhouse** for potted plant experiments, an **herbarium**, and a **field specimen** holding space.

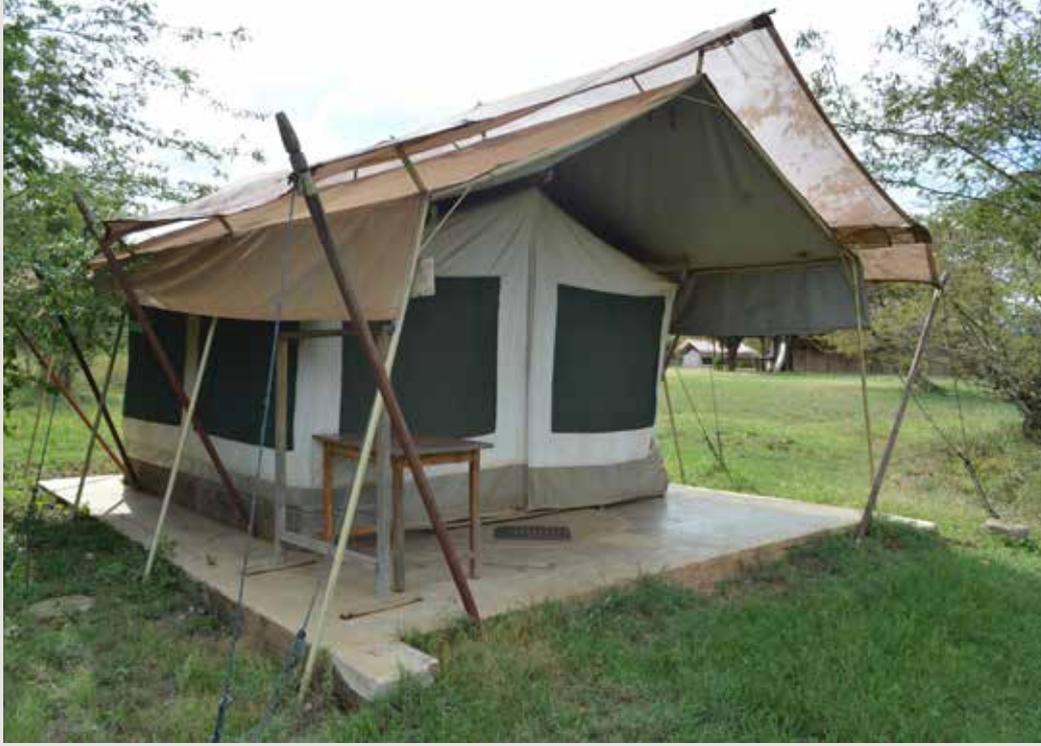
**The Graham Library** provides a comfortable reading and working area with some guidebooks, ecology and conservation reference texts, and back-copies of select African journals. The adjacent **classroom/conference hall** has a 60-seat capacity and provides additional working space when not in use for a meeting or lecture.

The Main Research Centre's comfortable **accommodation** is provided in four single and six shared-room rondavals (bandas); the Keller dormitory (which accommodates 14 total in two rooms); the Princeton dormitory, which includes two single rooms, four twin-sharing rooms and two shared bathrooms; four twobedroom houses; one single-bedroom house; and two private bungalows.

The houses and private bungalows have fully equipped kitchens and offer the option of **self-catering**. They also have their own compounds and parking areas.

## Ewaso Nyiro River Camp

The Ewaso Nyiro River Camp is located 4 km from the Main Centre. It has 16 fully-furnished sleeping tents arranged along the riverbank, each with twin beds and a porch area where visitors can relax and watch the river and wildlife passing by on the opposite bank. There is also a central tent with tables and camp chairs, which functions as a lecture hall and dining area. There is a shower and bathroom block at each end of the camp, making the compound almost symmetrical, with the main tent as the mirror line.



## The Ranch House

At the old Mpala Ranch house, guests are offered accommodation in one of eight luxurious bedrooms, along with full board. Guests can enjoy breakfasts and lunches in the garden, and wildlife sightings from the comfort of their porch.



# RESEARCH LOGISTICS

**Research permits** are required for all scientific studies at Mpala. Mpala Operations Assistant Fardosa Hassan (opsassistant@mpala.org) can help guide you through the permit application process.

In any **publications** based on research conducted at Mpala, we request that you list Mpala Research Centre as one of your institutions, and, if possible, include “Mpala Research Centre” among your keywords.

**Our two laboratories**, the McCormack and NSF Laboratories, are available for communal use. If you wish to **reserve bench space** or **a lab office** for your project’s exclusive use, please contact the Logistics Manager, Cosmas Nzomo (stay@mpala.org).

We do not have **hazardous waste disposal** on-site at Mpala. If your research generates hazardous or bio-hazardous waste, we ask that you take it with you and safely dispose of it elsewhere, or cover the cost for safe disposal at the Cottage Hospital in Nanyuki. To make arrangements for waste disposal, or with any questions, please contact the Logistics Manager, Cosmas Nzomo (stay@mpala.org) or the current Science Coordinator (science@mpala.org).

**Long-term sample storage** is not permitted in either of the communal laboratory spaces. Gear, equipment and sample **storage space** is available at a small fee in a secure storage facility on the Mpala campus.

**Equipment storage** in the labs must be approved by the administration through the current Science Coordinator (science@mpala.org), with the understanding that equipment stored in the labs may be used by other researchers.

The Ecohydrology Lab at Mpala maintains a long-term **weather dataset** that tracks rainfall, temperature, humidity, solar irradiation, and wind year-round. For an overview of this data, visit the weather portal on our website ([www.mpala.org/The\\_Landscape.php](http://www.mpala.org/The_Landscape.php)).

On-site there is a **Smithsonian Mpala Veterinary Research Fellow**, Dr. Maureen Kamau (si.vet@mpala.org), who can assist with projects that physically handle animals.

You can also find **maps** of Mpala and the surrounding area online ([www.mpala.org/Maps.php](http://www.mpala.org/Maps.php)); more detailed maps of the Mpala environment and research projects are available upon request.

With requests for more detailed weather or mapping resources, or other research related questions, please reach out to the current Science Coordinator (science@mpala.org).



# IMPORTANT CONTACTS

**Security Control Room:** 0772 481213

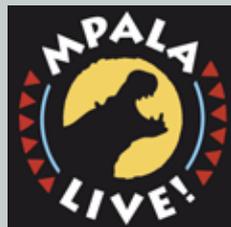
*Your first call for any security or urgent logistical concerns*

**Cosmas Nzomo**, Logistics Manager: stay@mpala.org; 0772 481217

**Fardosa Hassan**, Operations Assistant: opsassistant@mpala.org; 0773 368302

**Science Cordinator:** science@mpala.org; 7780 79030

**Education Coordinator:** education@mpala.org; 0778 764104



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WHERE HERITAGE LIVES ON

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info@mpala.org  
www.mpala.org  
www.mpalalive.org

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